

The Weekly

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Bridging the Gap brings minority undergrads to Keck

By Amy E. Hamaker

A new effort to attract top minority students to the Keck School of Medicine has brought 12 undergraduate students to the Health Sciences Campus this summer.

The Bridging the Gaps: Bench to Bedside Summer Research Program, the first of its kind at USC, provides an opportunity to outstanding minority students to gain exposure to the Keck School's research and clinical programs—and hopefully choose to pursue their medical or graduate studies at the Keck School.

"This program is our attempt to attract talented underrepresented minority students, especially African American students, to the USC campus," said Henri Ford, vice dean of medical education for the Keck School. "For the longest time, we really haven't been able to increase the number of African Americans inside the medical school or in biomedical research. Through this program, very talented stu-

dents from some of the best universities will get exposed to the science, mentoring and outstanding faculty we have at Keck."

This summer, the students will conduct summer research for eight weeks in the laboratories of Keck faculty, who will serve as mentors. Students will be provided with both a clinical and basic science perspective. Additionally, all students will attend weekly seminars on health disparities and receive formal instruction in basic physiology and biostatistics.

"The resources [for the program] became available this year through the help of Dean Puliafito, Henri Ford, Joyce Richey and Erin Yamauchi," noted Ita Laird-Offringa, director of Programs in Biomedical and Biological Sciences at USC.

In addition to the research component of the program, students attend workshops on financial aid, understanding the admission process to medical and/or graduate school, test-taking skills, organizational skills, time

management and career choices. Summer students are also paired with medical and graduate students who will serve as peer mentors. Student mentors help organize weekend and evening social outings, including community service outreach.

Matching promising students with the right Keck mentors is an important part of the program. Adam Ross, a student at the University of San Francisco, is paired with Robert Chow, associate professor of physiology and biophysics.

"In my lab we work in the area of diabetes—generally speaking, how cells control the substances they secrete (insulin, hormones or neu-

rotransmitters, for example)," explained Chow. Ross has a personal interest in Chow's research, as he has type 1 diabetes.

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Rutgers University student Eunice Martins (left) shares the Bridging the Gap program's opening day events with Ita Laird-Offringa, director of the PIBBS program at USC, who is helping coordinate the students and faculty.

Jon Nalick

'This program is our attempt to attract talented underrepresented minority students, especially African American students, to the USC campus.'

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

New administrator leads patient experience initiatives

By Tania Chatila

With a new leader in place and a list of goals to be accomplished, the USC hospitals' Patient Experience Department is undergoing a major overhaul of programs and services to help ensure patient-centered care.

Sevanne Sarkis joined USC University Hospital and USC Norris Cancer Hospital as administrative director of patient experience in April. Since then she has been working to get a number of key initiatives off the ground.

"Our first and foremost priority at the USC hospitals has always been and continues to be our patients—and their families," Sarkis said. "When they come to us, we want them to feel good about placing their care in our hands. That means everything from bedside care to the condition of our

inpatient rooms to making sure everyone gets a warm 'Hello' when they walk through the doors."

As the director overseeing the Patient Experience Department, Sarkis will play an integral role in increasing patient satisfaction within the clinical enterprise, according to administrators.

She is responsible for leading the medical center's patient- and family-centered care initiative, which encompasses patient satisfaction, patient advocacy, complaint and compliment management, volunteer services, concierge services and overall customer service.

Topping her list of priorities is improving the hospital's patient survey scores. Sarkis plans to collaborate with key partners to begin disseminating department-specific data throughout the organization in real time. By doing

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Sevanne Sarkis

CHLA to open new hospital building July 17

Keck School of Medicine-affiliated Children's Hospital Los Angeles is poised to open the Marion and John E. Anderson Pavilion, the most technologically advanced pediatric and adolescent hospital in the nation, on July 17.

The \$636 million, 317-bed hospital building will lead the way for a new generation of family-centered care, expanding services and boosting the ability to provide medical care to children throughout the region.

Primarily staffed by Keck School faculty physicians, Children's Hospital Los Angeles is one of the nation's best children's hospitals serving more than 97,000 patients each year and offering care from some of the world's most prestigious physicians and surgeons.

CHLA officials recently announced that longtime supporters Marion and John E. Anderson have made a \$50 million transformative gift for its new state-of-the-art hospital building, which will bear their names in honor of the couple's generosity.

"We are thrilled beyond words by Marion and John's

gift, the latest in a long line of generous support from these two leaders of the Los Angeles philanthropic community," said Richard D. Cordova, president and chief executive officer of Children's Hospital Los Angeles. "Marion has been one of the key leaders of this institution for the past two decades, and the Andersons' philanthropic support is just one aspect of how they've helped make us the best children's hospital in the West."

"We feel so fortunate to be able to make this gift to the children of Southern California and beyond," said

Marion Anderson. "Children's Hospital Los Angeles saves lives and offers hope to tens of thousands of children and families each year. This gift is our way of saying thank you to everyone at the hospital. Their work is amazing, and John and I can't think of a more deserving institution."

In addition to serving on Children's Hospital Board of Trustees since 1989, Marion Anderson co-chaired the Living Proof: the Campaign for Children's Hospital Los Angeles, launched in 2003 to raise funds to build the

See **CHLA**, page 2



Celebrating the \$50 million transformative gift to Children's Hospital Los Angeles, hospital officials recently held a ceremony to honor Marion and John Anderson. From left are CHLA President and CEO Richard Cordova, Surgeon-in-Chief and Keck School of Medicine Vice Dean of Medical Education Henri Ford, Marion Anderson, honorary board member Walter Rose and Board of Trustees Co-chair Jack Pettker.

Courtesy Children's Hospital Los Angeles

School of Pharmacy awards world's first doctorates in regulatory science

'This program [allows] you to effectively function in any country and to move projects forward.'

—Martin Solberg, recipient of the new Doctorate of Regulatory Science

By Kukla Vera

The School of Pharmacy awarded the Doctor of Regulatory Science to Martin Solberg, Michael Jamieson and Susan Bain at the USC commencement ceremony on May 13, an international first.

This professional doctorate is a novel, specialized program of study that cultivates research, leadership and inquiry skills in advanced students pursuing the emerging profession of global regulatory science. The curriculum focuses on product lifestyle strategy, project and personnel management, and global regulatory strategy and policy.

According to Frances Richmond, who directs the regulatory science program, all students are required to visit regulatory agencies and leaders in both Europe and Asia as part of the curriculum.

To Martin Solberg, one of this year's graduates, this offered an extraordinary opportunity. As vice president for global regulatory affairs at Genzyme Corporation in Cambridge, Mass., Solberg oversees regula-

tory issues in some 185 countries where his company does business.

"This program provides a framework through which to analyze a situation and put the pieces together, allowing you to effectively function in any country and to move projects forward," said Solberg.

Given the global nature of today's marketplace and the attendant international travel that comes with it, it might seem baffling that professionals working in this area are able to find time to pursue a professional doctorate. But like Solberg, Susan Bain, vice president of operations at SpineWorks, a medical device company in Huntington Beach, agrees that the program is of great value to a working professional. Bain is also a former FDA investigator.

"When you work at a start-up company, you need a 'soup to nuts' toolkit to navigate through licensing, regulatory, quality, manufacturing and clinical trials," said Bain. "The doctoral program provided me access



Kukla Vera

From left, DRSc graduates Michael Jamieson, Susan Bain and Martin Solberg are the first to receive this degree.

to the necessary tools and gave me unique insights into the international marketplace."

Echoing his classmates, Michael Jamieson, who has worked in a variety of industry roles for nearly 30 years, found that the program offered him a distinctive opportunity to enhance his career. With broad global experience, Jamieson has provided regulatory consulting services to companies throughout North and South America and Europe.

In addition to the three doctoral degrees awarded at this year's commencement, the regulatory science program also conferred 23 M.S. in Regulatory Science degrees. The school also offers Pharm.D. students an opportunity to pursue a Pharm.D./M.S. in Regulatory Science dual degree. More information about the School of Pharmacy Regulatory Science Program is available at <http://pharmacyschool.usc.edu/programs/rs/>.

USC colorectal cancer survivor throws first pitch at L.A. Dodgers game

By Valerie Zapanta

Dan Kanne, 52, of Huntington Beach, Calif., threw out the ceremonial first pitch at the Los Angeles Dodgers–Houston Astros game on Saturday, June 18.

Kanne, a colorectal cancer survivor, represented USC Norris Cancer Hospital and USC University Hospital, where he received treatment for both colorectal cancer and epilepsy. Glenn Ault, assistant professor of surgery at the Keck School of Medicine, was also on the field with Kanne to represent the division of colorectal surgery.

After a routine colonoscopy in December 2010, Kanne was told that a cancerous tumor in its early stages had been

discovered. Kanne's surgeon, Anthony Senagore, professor and chief of the division of colorectal surgery, successfully performed laparoscopic surgery to remove part of Kanne's colon in February 2011. This type of minimally invasive surgery, in which Senagore holds special expertise, is not widely performed elsewhere. Kanne spent only three days in the hospital, a significantly shortened period of recovery time due in large part to the specialized minimally invasive treatment.

However, this was not the first time Kanne was treated at USC. At an early age, Kanne had a brain tumor removed and underwent subsequent radiation treatment. Years later



Steve Cohn Photography

USC colorectal cancer survivor patient Dan Kanne threw out the ceremonial first pitch at a June 18 L.A. Dodgers game with his wife Betty by his side. A Dodgers ball boy was the catcher.

as an adult, Kanne began to suffer from profound seizures, most likely related to the cancer treatment he had received for the brain tumor. In August 2010, under the care of Christi Heck, director of the USC Adult Epilepsy Program and professor of neurology, Kanne underwent intense treatment for his seizures. He has slowly recovered since then.

The collaboration between Heck and Senagore during Kanne's cancer treatment ensured successful outcomes for his laparoscopic procedure and recovery.

"The multifaceted, collaborative resources, and all the highest levels of excellence made USC the optimum choice for Dan's care. His experiences with USC have

been extraordinary at every turn and have quite literally saved his life," said Betty Kanne, his wife.

About his first pitch, Kanne said he had been looking forward to representing USC as a testament to the expert care that, as he puts it, "saved my life twice."

The Weekly

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CHLA: Gift will fund new hospital project

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new hospital and provide vital support for The Saban Research Institute, as well as clinical and research programs. Under her leadership, the campaign raised more than \$1 billion, making it not only the most successful fundraising effort in Children's Hospital history, but also the only single fundraising campaign by a freestanding, independent children's hospital to raise \$1 billion.

The Andersons have been community supporters for many years. John is chairman of Topa Equities, Ltd., which owns more than 42 businesses involved in

agriculture, insurance, real estate, wholesale beverage distribution and automotive dealerships. Marion is vice chairman of Topa Equities, Ltd., and is an active member of the University of California, Los Angeles Anderson Board of Visitors. John and Marion are lifelong supporters of the YMCA of Greater Los Angeles. Marion also serves Children's Hospital as a member of the steering committee of the New Hospital Campaign Committee and a member of the Development Advisory Campaign Cabinet and the Saban Research Institute Committee.

Keck alum named director of the California Department of Public Health

By Amy E. Hamaker
California Health and Human Services (CHHS) secretary Diana Dooley recently announced the appointment of Keck School of Medicine alum Ronald W. Chapman as the new director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). Chapman succeeds former director Mark B. Horton, who left office on March 1.

Chapman, who received his Doctor of Medicine from the Keck School in 1989, has served as the chief medical officer for Partnership HealthPlan California since 2010.

Previously, he served as the health officer for Solano County Public Health and as the chief of the Medicine and Public Health Section for the California Department of Health Services.

“This is a fantastic opportunity to work with California Governor [Jerry] Brown, Secretary Dooley, and the team they’ve put together—all professionals whose work I really admire,” said Chapman, who is a board-certified family practice physician. “I’ve spent my career dedicated to working with the underinsured and uninsured in California, and

I’m excited to be part of the team.”

Chapman credits his time at the Keck School for his skills and his love of public service. “I had great mentors at USC,” he said. I loved my time there and at Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center. Training there made me an outstanding clinician, and those skills will go with me for the rest of my life.”

CHHS oversees 12 departments and one board that provide services for health care, social services, mental health, alcohol and drug treatment, income assistance

and public health. CDPH’s specific mission is to optimize the health and well-being of the people in California. The department’s core activities include: promoting healthy lifestyles; preventing disease, disability and premature death; reducing or eliminating health disparities; protecting the public from unhealthy and unsafe environments; providing or ensuring access to health services; preparing for, and responding to, public health emergencies; and producing and disseminating data on public health status, strategies and programs.

“Public health is a major concern for the people of California, and the partnership between the Keck School and Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center gives students and residents an opportunity to work with public health issues they might not otherwise see,” said Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito. “We’re proud to have a Keck alum take the lead in safeguarding and improving the health of the people of California.”

Chapman’s first concern when he takes office is to listen. “I want to get out and understand the needs and priorities of the people of California and the partners who do this work on the front line,” he said.

‘I had great mentors at USC. I loved my time there and at Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center. Training there made me an outstanding clinician, and those skills will go with me for the rest of my life.’

— Ronald W. Chapman, director of the California Department of Public Health



NEW DAY, NEW NAME—Making some final adjustments on June 21, workers hang the new Keck Medical Center of USC banner in front of USC University Hospital, which will be renamed Keck Hospital of USC. The new banner was erected in recognition of the recent \$150 million gift to USC from the W. M. Keck Foundation.

PATIENT: New initiative aims to make hospital stays more comfortable for patients

Continued from page 1

so, she hopes to initiate pilot programs to determine the most effective and sustainable ways to improve scores and enhance the patient experience. Sarkis also hopes that by improving patient satisfaction, she can leverage the hospitals’ competitive edge in vying for Medicare funding set aside specifically for top-scoring facilities.

“It has been a longtime goal of ours to develop and expand our patient experience program,” said Jill Mathison, associate administrator of

operations. “The hospital experience can sometimes be a scary one. We’re excited about coming up with new ways to make our patients feel comfortable and at ease while being cared for.”

Among the other initiatives Sarkis will lead are:

- Pilot a customer service program in the outpatient clinics and doctor’s offices;
- Create an executive rounding program, where hospital managers and directors can frequent patient rooms to see what can be done to improve their experience;

- Initiate a service recovery program to log, address and follow up on issues and complaints in real time, while also capturing and sharing the positive stories and compliments patients have about the hospitals and staff.
- Pilot an interactive patient education and entertainment system on the 8th and 9th floors of USC University Hospital’s Norris Inpatient Tower. This program would allow patients and their families to access health information, patient specific education materials,

entertainment options and interactive discharge information all via a touch-screen program; and

- Build the hospitals’ Community Benefit Program, which supports worthy health care initiatives and programs in the greater Los Angeles area and demonstrates the organization’s commitment to the health of the community.

She is also working closely with the Patient Experience Design Team, which was launched earlier this year as part of Project Transformation and the hospitals’ strategic

planning initiative.

Before coming to USC, Sarkis worked as an attorney and advocate representing special needs children, disabled adults and the elderly. She holds a master’s degree in education from Boston College and a law degree from Loyola. She is currently completing a master’s in health administration at USC and recently co-authored the California Healthcare Foundation publication, *Physicians on Call: California’s Patchwork Approach to Emergency Department Coverage*.

The Weekly NEWSMAKERS

A June 7 article in *The Nation* (Pakistan) mentioned research by **Pragna Patel**, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the Institute for Genetic Medicine of the Keck School of Medicine, who helped discover a gene mutation that causes a rare condition in which people grow excess hair all over their bodies. The discovery may hold promise for treating baldness or hirsutism in the future, Patel said. The discovery was also covered by AOL News, Live Science and Asian News International.

A June 10 NBC News story featured research by **Markus Muschen**, leader of the USC Norris Com-

prehensive Cancer Center’s Leukemia and Lymphoma Program and associate professor of pediatrics, biochemistry and molecular biology at the Keck School of Medicine.

The results of his research might explain why some children who relapse with leukemia don’t respond to treatment.

On June 13, *The Los Angeles Times* reported that the W. M. Keck Foundation gave a \$150 million gift to USC’s medical enterprise, which comprises the Keck Medical Center of USC and Keck School of Medicine. The news was also covered by *The*

Chronicle of Higher Education, *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, Associated Press, Bloomberg News and ABC News, among others.

A June 16 article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia) highlighted research by **Howard Hodis**, cardiology professor at the Keck School of Medicine and director of the USC Atherosclerosis Research Unit, that looked at the use of specific estrogen to improve vascular health in women who are near menopause.

The story was picked up by the *Port Stephens Examiner* and *Brisbane Times*.

BRIDGE: Program matches promising students with key mentors

Continued from page 1

“Right now, our country is in dire need of more young, energetic scientists—people who really want to solve major health problems,” said Chow. “I don’t know why, but for the last 30 to 40 years, it seems many of the promising students have been going into Wall Street. I think we need to do more recruiting because our scientific community does not have a proportionate number of minority people in positions of power or in research.”

For this first summer ses-

sion, research positions were available in metabolic diseases, oncology, cardiovascular, neuroscience, immunology, virology, hematology and stem cell research.

Cristian Carrillo, a student at California State University, Monterey Bay, is interested in pursuing an M.D. to work within the community. He’s been paired with Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati, an associate professor at the Institute for Prevention Research, to work on her My L.A. program for minority youth who have

problems with obesity.

“I feel that the Bridging the Gap program fits with everything I want to accomplish in my career,” said Carrillo. “I want to make an impact in someone’s life, as well as getting the research experience.”

If early student response is any indication, the program should be a success.

“There’s so much collaborative research going on,” said Eunice Martins, a public health student at Rutgers University who hopes to study neuroscience. “Something really amazing is going to go down here, and I want to be here to be part of it.”



Jon Nalick

Keck School Dean Carmen A Puliafito (left) and University of San Francisco student Adam Ross discuss some of the finer points of the Bridging the Gap summer program at a reception held on June 13 at the dean’s home.

Craig Lauder, support supervisor for Audio Visual Services, 59

Craig Lauder, support supervisor for Audio Visual Services in the Department of Educational Affairs, died June 12. He was 59.

Lauder came to the Keck School of Medicine in March 1984 and worked in Audio Visual Services in the Department of Educational Affairs for the past 27 years, providing service to every department on campus.

Lauder is survived by his wife, Jennifer, and his three young daughters Emily, Megan and Alison. He was known for his warm smile, his time spent as a soccer dad and his love of sushi and travel.

A service in memory of



Craig Lauder

Lauder was held on June 18 in Mayer Auditorium, located on the Health Sciences Campus.

Calendar of Events

This Calendar of Events is also online at www.usc.edu/hscalendar for the Health Sciences Campus community

Monday, June 27

Noon. KSOM Research Seminar. “Proteins Polymers—A Platform for Biopharmaceutical Delivery and Self-Assembly,” J. Andrew MacKay, USC. NRT Aresty Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-3568

Tuesday, June 28

Noon. CHLA Saban Research Institute Research Seminar. “Identification of Allosteric Modulators of the MC4R,” Roger Cone, Vanderbilt Univ. CHLA Saban Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-3849

Tuesday, July 12

Noon – 2 p.m. Cancer Survivorship Advisory Council Meeting. NOR 8th Floor Conference Room. Infor: (323) 865-0801

Friday, July 22

Noon. Physical Sciences in Oncology Center Seminar. “Trans-generational Inheritance of DNA Methylation,” Matteo Pellegrini, UCLA. CSC 201. Info: (323) 442-3849

Thursday, Sept. 22

8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. 15th Annual Max R. Gaspar Vascular Symposium. “All Aorta from the Valve to Bifurcation,” Jack Cronnswett, Dartmouth. Millenium Biltmore Hotel. Info and Registration: (323) 442-2555

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 email 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.

Keck researcher helps identify new target for breast cancer therapy

By Amy E. Hamaker

Estrogen receptors, in particular estrogen receptor α (ER α), have long been a therapy target for women who have breast cancer treatment, but many of those women suffer relapse.

A new study published May 22 online in the journal *Nature Medicine* by Heinz-Josef Lenz, professor of medicine and preventive medicine and holder of the Kathryn M. Balakrishnan Chair in Cancer Research at the Keck School of Medicine, and a team of researchers shows that a particular kinase enzyme may be worth studying for future therapy because of its ability to regulate estrogen receptor function.

His group had previously identified that estrogen plays a critical role in colon cancer progression.

In collaboration with a colleague from Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust in the United Kingdom, Lenz found a novel gene in this pathway that is associated with positive outcomes in breast cancer and is now being tested in colon cancer.

In “Kinome screening for regulators of the estrogen receptor identifies LMTK3 as a new therapeutic target in breast cancer,” Lenz, who is also co-director of the USC Center for Molecular Pathways and Drug Dis-

covery, looked for proteins that showed evidence of Darwinian positive selection as measured by analyzing changes in synonymous versus nonsynonymous genomic alterations.

He found that one of the most potent regulators of estrogen receptor activity is the lemur tyrosine kinase-3 (LMTK3), which didn’t previously have an assigned role in therapy.

Estrogen receptors are protein molecules found inside cells that accept and bind estrogen.

The bound estrogen and receptor affect DNA sites near estrogen-controlled genes, which stimulates the cells to replicate themselves and may lead to a higher risk

of developing cancer, including breast and colon cancer

Unlike other ER α activity modulators, LMTK3 seems to have been subject to Darwinian positive selection, although it’s unclear as to why.

However, this evolutionary tradeoff may have led to increased human susceptibility to breast cancer.

“These findings yield insights into the natural history of breast cancer in humans and reveal LMTK3 as a new therapeutic target for breast and perhaps even colon cancer,” said the authors in their conclusion.

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