

# Hospitals make strides in peri-op improvement effort

By Tania Chatila

Significant efforts are under way to enhance peri-operative services at USC University Hospital.

Launched earlier this year, administrators say the Peri-operative Performance Improvement Initiative is key to the hospitals' strategic planning effort, and several advancements are already under way.

The project is focused on three key strategic areas of improvement: short-term and long-term planning to streamline processes and increase efficiency within the operating areas; day-to-day operations management and decision-making support; and growth and expansion of services.

In the last few weeks, headway has been made in improving efficiencies to pre-surgery and day-of-surgery processes. Some of these improvements include:

- Integration of a streamlined consent form process;
- Redesign of PACE scheduling policies and procedures to streamline processes and optimize PACE capacity;
- Implementation of a patient tracking form to better understand delays during first cases of the day;
- Updates to tracking of operating room instruments and equipment; and
- Creation of standard forms to identify specific op-

erating room needs for each service line.

"Every accomplishment, whether it be large or small, is significant to this project," said Michael Campbell, who was recruited in June to serve as interim associate administrator of peri-operative services. "It's exciting to know that even a few months in, we're already seeing progress. I'm extremely confident we'll make even bigger strides as we push forward."

Campbell—a registered nurse with more than 20 years of experience in health care management—oversees the Pre-operative Assessment and Center for Education (PACE); the pre-operative area; inpatient and outpatient operating rooms; recovery; central sterile processing; operating room supply chain management; and surgery.

A significant component to the peri-operative project is the hospitals' partnership with GE Healthcare, which has representatives onsite helping to identify and implement plans for improvement. Two oversight committees comprised primarily of physicians working in the peri-operative areas have also been established to help lead the initiative and ensure its success.

"This initiative has been one of our top priorities, and we are excited about this opportunity to collaborate with

See **PERI-OP**, page 3



Ryan Ball

Keck School of Medicine student Vanessa Kreger accepts her white coat from Henri Ford, vice dean for medical education, at the Aug. 12 ceremony intended to instill a sense of professionalism in new student physicians.

## White coat ceremony welcomes new students

By Amy E. Hamaker

On a balmy Southern California summer evening, 180 members of the Class of 2015 of the Keck School of Medicine and their families gathered for the 2011 White Coat Ceremony in the Harry & Celesta Pappas Quad to celebrate their entry into the Trojan family.

During the event, held Aug. 12, new students received their first white coat, a symbol of their new status as part of the medical profession. The theme for the evening was the importance of maintaining the human connection in medicine, and the featured speakers stressed how the new students might achieve this.

Keynote speaker Stuart P. Swadron, director of the residency training program and 2011 Humanism in Medicine

Award recipient, reminded the incoming students that the human side of medicine is just as important to the practice of medicine as scientific proficiency and technical training.

"You are now part of the medical profession, with all that entails and implies," said Swadron. "The way you work here is a dress rehearsal for the way you'll interact with your patients. ... Be great to one another, ... be good to those who work around you and under you ... and enjoy being part of the greatest profession on earth."

Donna D. Elliott, associate dean for student affairs, who presided over the white coat ceremony, agreed. "Independent of all other pressures we face, respect for this relationship and commitment to the ideals of medicine are essential," she said.

Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito and Henri Ford, vice dean for medical education, stressed using teamwork and collaboration for students to support each other as they progressed in their medical education. During his opening comments, Ford compared the students' upcoming journey through medical school to taking part in the Olympics, in that they were all part of an elite team.

"But unlike the Olympics, where medals are given only to the top three athletes or teams, Dean Puliafito has 180 medals, one for each one of you," he said. "You will achieve this noble aspiration by merely finishing the race. And since you are guaranteed a medal at the end, perhaps the greatest, if not the only, thing that matters is how you run the race."

The impact of the ceremony was well received by students. "It was really inspiring," said new Keck student Laura Bernardini. "The most important thing about medicine is the patients, and it's nice to be reminded of that, especially on the long, cold nights that we'll be studying in the library."

New student Noah Swann agreed with the assessment. "I was really happy with emphasis on dealing with patients on the human level," said Swann, who has an interest in pediatrics. "That's something I think I'm going to emphasize in my career."

The evening also featured the 2011 Faculty Teaching Awards. To see the recipients, visit <http://tinyurl.com/3nvb7g2>.

## USC Norris receives \$32.5 million core grant renewal

By Sara Reeve

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) has awarded the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center a five-year, \$32.5 million core grant renewal to support its broad range of clinical, research and educational programs. The award is designed to reduce the impact of cancer upon the lives of people throughout California and beyond.

"In the past five years, the cancer center has grown in tremendous ways," said Peter A. Jones, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. "Receiving renewal of our core grant both acknowledges the exceptional work of our researchers and administration and ensures that progress in the fight against

cancer will continue to expand at USC Norris."

The USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center was established in 1971 and has benefited from continuous recognition and funding from the NCI since 1973, when it was named one of the original eight comprehensive cancer centers. It is one of only 40 comprehensive cancer centers in the country.

"This grant renewal reaffirms the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center not only as a center of research excellence in the basic and clinical sciences, but also as an important community and regional resource," said Carmen A. Puliafito, dean of the Keck School of Medicine.

Nearly 200 scientists and physicians from

the faculty of the Keck School of Medicine and several other USC professional schools/departments are members of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, investigating the complex origins and progression of cancer, developing prevention strategies and searching for cures.

The USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center provides comprehensive care for patients in its affiliated hospitals and outpatient clinics and conducts hundreds of clinical trials, offering the latest in innovative cancer treatments. USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center affiliated hospitals include the USC Norris Cancer Hospital, USC University Hospital, Children's Hospital Los Angeles and Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center.

# USC Researchers Link Genetic Marker to Rectal Cancer

**‘Cetuximab is usually used for metastatic colon cancer, for which it is effective. We’re asking if it could be effective for locally advanced rectal cancer.’**

**—Heinz-Josef Lenz, associate director, Gastrointestinal Oncology Program, USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and Hospital**

**By Alison Trinidad**

A team of researchers led by Keck School of Medicine oncologist Heinz-Josef Lenz has identified a genetic marker that may predict which patients with rectal cancer can be cured by certain chemotherapies when combined with surgery. The discovery, published in the Aug. 1 print edition of *Clinical Cancer Research*, brings doctors closer to customizing cancer treatment to individual patients.

Lenz, professor of medicine and preventive medicine in the division of medical oncology at the Keck School and the study’s principal investigator, analyzed the DNA of European patients with locally advanced rectal cancer who were treated with cetuximab (marketed as Erbitux) prior to surgery.

“Cetuximab is usually used for metastatic colon cancer, for which it is effective. We’re asking if it could be effective for locally advanced rectal cancer,” said Lenz, associate director of the Gastrointestinal Oncology Program at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and Hospital.

Colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diag-

nosed cancer and the third leading cause of cancer death among men and women in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society. The disease develops in the colon or rectum and, if detected in its early stages, usually can be completely removed by surgery. When it is locally advanced, however, the tumor cannot be easily removed, and doctors prescribe chemotherapy and radiation to make it more manageable before attempting surgical removal.

The retrospective analysis, first published online on June 14, found that 45 percent of patients with a particular genetic combination (EGF 61 G/G) emerged disease-free when treated with cetuximab before surgery, compared to 21 percent and 2 percent of patient groups who did not have the same genotype. This is the first study to suggest that the genetic variation—detectable by blood test—can be used to predict whether a patient with locally advanced rectal cancer will respond to cetuximab before surgery.

Cetuximab is a drug that is typically used to treat head and neck cancer and colorec-

tal cancer that has spread to other parts of the body. It blocks epidermal growth factor receptors (EGFR) from binding with epidermal growth factor (EGF) proteins found in the body, which have been linked to increased risk for cancer. For tumors that are difficult to cut out but have not yet spread to other parts of the body, the standard treatment is a combination of capecitabine (Xeloda), fluorouracil (5-FU) and radiation. The patients in the study received intravenous doses of cetuximab in addition to standard care.

Additional data is required to

validate the results, Lenz said. His lab is participating in another trial looking at a larger sample size in the United States.

The study was performed in the Sharon A. Carpenter Laboratory at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and Hospital and funded by the National Institutes of Health, Dhont Family Foundation, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), Cologne Fortune and San Pedro Peninsula Cancer Guild. Co-authors include Siwen Hu-Lieskovan, Wu Zhang, Dongyun Yang, Alexander Pohl and Melissa Labonte, among others.

## Apuzzo neurosurgery prize honors creativity, innovation

**By Ryan Ball**

Michael L. J. Apuzzo, the Edwin M. Todd/Trent H. Wells Jr. Professor of Neurological Surgery and Radiation Oncology, Biology and Physics at the Keck School of Medicine, has established an annual award to recognize unusual originality and innovation in contributions by neurosurgical residents to the medical literature.

The Department of Neurological Surgery awarded two neurosurgical trainees the Michael L. J. Apuzzo Prize for Creativity and Innovation during the department’s graduation dinner in June. The prize is endowed within the medical school and administered by the department.

Apuzzo is editor emeritus of *Neurosurgery*. He is currently editor-in-chief of *World Neurosurgery*, the official journal of the 35,000-member World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies.

Apuzzo observed that “publishing has been paramount in establishing USC’s reputation as a worldwide leader and innovator in the field of neurosurgery.” Over the past four decades, “the neurosurgery depart-

ment at the Keck School of Medicine has made seminal contributions to the field and has influenced the way that neurosurgery is practiced throughout the world.”

Apuzzo was impressed to find that the work of the department’s 14 current residents was instrumental in producing 60 original, peer-reviewed manuscripts published during the past academic year.

“I thought it was overdue that we consider having a prize given each year to an individual in training who developed the most original and innovative highest-quality piece of contribution to the literature,” said Apuzzo.

The 2011 award recipients are Keck School and Cal Tech graduate Brian Lee and USC/Johns Hopkins alumnus Alexander Taghva. Lee’s paper, “Area MSTd Neurons Encode Visual Stimuli in Eye Coordinates During Fixation and Pursuit,” appeared in the *Journal of Neurophysiology*. Taghva’s paper, “Hidden Semi-Markov Models in the Automated Decoding of Microelectrode Recording Data for Deep Brain Stimulator Placement,” appeared in *World Neurosurgery*.

## Critical care symposium draws 150 physicians

The Keck School of Medicine division of pulmonary, critical care and sleep medicine recently held a successful day-long regional medical symposium in Los Angeles that attracted more than 150 physician subspecialists and general internists from throughout Southern California.

The June event provided state-of-the-art overviews focused on recent advances in diagnostic and manage-

ment strategies for important pulmonary topics such as lung cancer, pulmonary hypertension, sleep apnea, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cystic fibrosis, lung transplantation, fungal lung infections and cardiopulmonary exercise testing. Organizers said audience feedback praised the quality and impact of the event’s presentation and educational content.

Nationally renowned

experts who participated included: Lewis Rubin, professor of medicine at UC San Diego; Michael Gould, associate professor of clinical medicine at the Keck School; and Richard Barbers, professor of clinical medicine at the Keck School.

The event was supported, in part, by USC University Hospital and the USC Lung Transplant Program, as well as various industry medical education grants.

The Weekly

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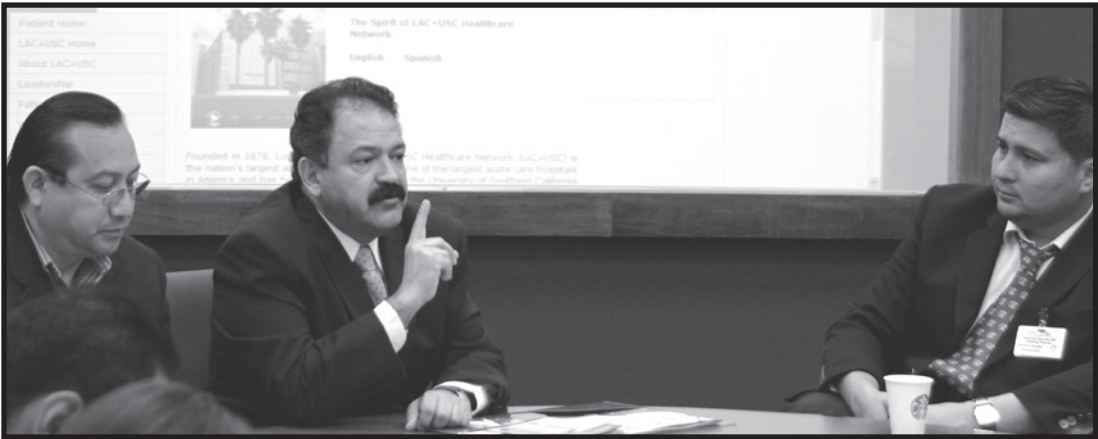
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Kavita Munjal

**L.K. WHITTIER FOUNDATION VISITS**—Linda Blinkenberg (left) and Laura-Lee Whittier Woods (center) of the L.K. Whittier Foundation visited with Edward Crandall, Hastings Professor and Norris Chair of Medicine, at the Health Sciences Campus July 12. The L.K. Whittier Foundation recently gave a \$3 million gift to the Keck School to fund the L.K. Whittier Foundation Nanobiotechnology Initiative. The foundation has made gifts to USC totaling nearly \$24.5 million since 1984.





**MEXICO CITY DELEGATION VISITS HSC**—A medical delegation from Mexico City, Mexico, led by Armando Ahued (center), secretary of health for Mexico City, visited with Keck School of Medicine faculty and LAC+USC Medical Center personnel at the Health Sciences Campus on Aug. 12. During his visit, Ahued and Netza Roldan (left), director of Casa Ciudad de Mexico in Chicago, discussed the mutual health problems faced by Mexico City and Los Angeles with meeting facilitator Alejandro Sanchez (right), visiting professor and director of the Office of Global Health at the Keck School.

Amy Hamaker

## Republic of Italy honors Keck School professor

By Amy E. Hamaker

Vito M. Campese, chief of the division of nephrology/hypertension and a professor of medicine at the Keck School of Medicine, was named Commander of the Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity at a celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of Italy’s unification.

The Consul General of Italy in Los Angeles, the Hon. Nicola Faganello, presented Campese with his insignias and diplomas at the celebration on June 1.

“It’s a big honor, and to receive it makes me feel that I’ve done something right in my life,” said Campese. “That the award comes from my own home country gives me particular pleasure.”

Campese was honored for his contributions as president and the major founder of the Italian Scientists and Scholars in North America Foundation. ISSNAF is a nonprofit organization that promotes contact, collaboration, fellowships and joint research among Italian scientists and

scholars in North America and Italian institutions in the fields of biology, the humanities, medicine, mathematics, physics, engineering, information technology and social sciences. Thirty-six people currently work with the foundation, including four Nobel Prize winners.

A native of Bari, Italy, Campese first came to the Keck School on a fellowship in 1974. Campese also has served as president of the Italian-American Society of Nephrologists.

Created in 1947, the Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity was the first award of the Republic of Italy, honoring Italian citizens residing abroad or foreign citizens who have rendered outstanding services to Italy through the teaching of the Italian language, literature and culture, in support of humanitarian or medical- and health-related activities, and in promoting relations between Italian and host groups.

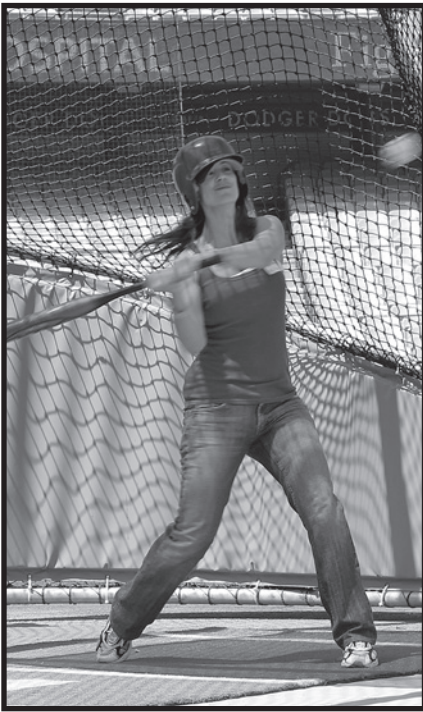
## PERI-OP: New Initiative Is a Team Effort

Continued from page 1  
our operating room staff, our surgeons and GE to improve services for our patients,” said Chief Operating Officer Scott Evans.

Leaders say the collaboration between staff and physicians has been especially motivating throughout the process.

“Because this is such a critical initiative, it is truly taking the involvement of everyone on the operating room staff—

from surgeons and anesthesiologists to nurses and surgical technicians—to make this project a success,” said Earl Strum, medical director of the operating room and chief of anesthesiology. “We’ve never seen our employees and physicians come together like this before. There is truly a newfound spirit of collaboration in the OR as we work toward one common goal—to provide the best experience for our patients.”



Tania Chatila

**BATTER UP!**—At left, Cortney Montgomery, clinical nutrition manager at USC University Hospital, takes a swing at home plate at Los Angeles Dodgers stadium as part of a special event recognizing employees of the USC hospitals. The event, held Aug. 7, was attended by nearly 160 hospital employees and their guests. Included in the day’s activities were batting from home plate, fielding and pitching, and touring the Dodgers Clubhouse. Guests were also able to test their skills in the Dodgers’ underground batting cages and hang out in the stadium team dugouts with Dodgers legends Tim Leary and Bill Russell.

## RPB awards grants to USC researchers

By Amy E. Hamaker

Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB), a voluntary organization supporting eye research, recently made two grants to USC researchers.

The first is a \$250,000 RPB Career Development Award to the Keck School of Medicine to support eye research conducted by James Chee Hian Tan, assistant professor of ophthalmology. The support is provided over a four-year period.

Tan’s research centers on glaucoma, a leading cause of irreversible blindness worldwide. “In glaucoma, the eye pressure becomes too high and kills nerve cells in the retina and optic nerve,” explained Tan. “When we treat glaucoma patients, we lower the eye pressure to preserve vision. Unfortunately, we don’t understand why eye pressure becomes high in most people with glaucoma.

“In my laboratory, we’re trying to understand how eye pressure is controlled,” he continued. “We’re focusing on the cells of the eye’s fluid drainage tissue. These cells uniquely allow the drainage tissue to work like a biological flow valve. We want to explore this concept, learn how it sets eye pressure, and figure out how to manipulate it for therapy.”

The second grant is a \$30,000 Medical Student Eye Research Fellowship, allowing Keck School student Kevin Tozer to take a year off from medical school to devote time to research within the Department of Ophthalmology. Tozer has been analyzing postmortem specimens of optic nerves from patients who had Leber’s hereditary optic neuropathy (LHON), a rare genetic condition that causes blindness. LHON specifically destroys retinal ganglion cells (RGC), whose fibers make up the optic nerve.

According to Alfredo Sadun, a professor of ophthalmology and neurosurgery at the Keck School, Tozer’s work has revealed that approximately 1 percent of RGCs are resistant to LHON. Tozer’s research could prove useful in helping develop protection for the optic nerve from LHON and, eventually, providing vision to those blinded by LHON and other eye diseases.

Since its founding in 1960, RPB has channeled hundreds of millions of dollars, including the Career Development Fund, to medical institutions for research into the causes, treatment and prevention of blinding eye diseases.

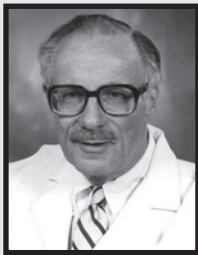
## IN MEMORIAM

### Critical care medicine pioneer Max Harry Weil, 84

Max Harry Weil, a former USC faculty member and pioneer in the field of critical-care medicine, has died at the age of 84. Weil died of prostate cancer on July 29 at his home in Rancho Mirage, where he founded the Weil Institute of Critical Care Medicine.

“Hal trained fellows from all over the world, and their activities have spread the concept and reality of critical care globally,” said Philip D. Lumb, professor and chairman of the Department of Anesthesiology at the Keck School of Medicine. “His vision was to save more lives.”

Weil was on the faculty at USC from 1958 to 1981. He and fellow USC cardiologist Herbert S. Shubin founded the nonprofit Institute of Critical Care Medicine at the Keck School in 1961. They are credited with laying the foundation for modern intensive



Max Harry Weil

care units by establishing a four-bed “shock ward” at Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center.

Founding president of the Society of Critical Care Medicine, Weil was instrumental in introducing computerized patient monitors that measure a patient’s vital signs and computer-aided medical decision-making (1976), and he implemented the first “STAT” laboratory (1981), which provided quick lab results for the evaluation and treatment of critically ill patients in the ICU.

Weil received the American Heart Association’s lifetime achievement award for contributions to emergency cardiovascular care.

Weil was co-inventor of 25 U.S. patented medical devices and treatments, including a resuscitation blanket, a capnometer for measuring severity of shock and an automated chest compressor.

Weil is survived by his wife, his two daughters and four granddaughters.

### Lisa Kofman, Norris Medical Library staffer, 57

Lisa Kofman, Norris Medical Library’s office technology coordinator, died on July 20. She was 57.

Kofman provided support for USC computer accounts to health sciences users and handled library room reservations for campus groups and departments. In those capacities, she assisted countless people in the university, and she was known for her outstanding service and professionalism, as well as her humor.

Kofman received the Health Sciences



Lisa Kofman

Libraries’ annual outstanding staff award twice during her 12 years of service with the library. She also served two terms on the USC Staff Assembly.

Kofman is survived by her husband, Reuben, daughter, Abra, and son, Ryan. A celebration of her life with family and friends was held at the family home on July 24.



# 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

## Friday, Aug. 26 – Saturday, Aug. 27

Children's Hospital Los Angeles Symposium. "The Meaningful Use of Complex Medical Data," various speakers. CHLA: Saban Auditorium. Info: (323) 361-8505

## Wednesday, Aug. 31

**8:30 a.m.** "Introduction to Clinical Research," Alex Balekian, USC. IRD 732-734. Info: (323) 226-7923

## Wednesday, Sept. 7

**Noon.** ZNI Seminar. "Clathrin is Not Required for Clathrin-mediated Endocytosis," Erik Jorgensen, University of Utah. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

## Tuesday, Sept. 13

**Noon.** Psychiatry Grand Rounds. "Discussing Sexuality with Patients," Berta Davis, UCLA. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-4065

## Wednesday, Sept. 14

**Noon.** ZNI Seminar Series. "Retinal Circuits Underlying Circadian Photoentrainment and Mood," Samer Hattar, Johns Hopkins. ZNI 112. Info: (323) 442-2144

## Sunday, Sept. 18

**8:45 a.m.** "Kickin' Cancer! 5K Walk/Run," to raise awareness for the early detection and prevention of ovarian and breast cancer. San Vicente Blvd., Brentwood. Join the USC Norris team: (323) 865-0668

## Wednesday, Sept. 21, and Thursday, Sept. 22

**7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.** USC Hospitals Annual Pain Management Symposium. Various speakers. NRT Aresty Auditorium. Info: (323) 442-8660

## 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 Cronenwett, Dartmouth. Millennium Biltmore Hotel. Info and registration: (323) 442-2555

## Friday, Sept. 23

**Noon.** "Infectious Disease Clinical Pathological Conference," Maria Ochoa, USC. IPT Conference Rm. D. Info: (323) 226-7504

## Saturday, Sept. 24

**7:45 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.** KSOM Continuing Medical Education Symposium. "Multimodality Treatment of Brain Cancer: Current Concepts and Recent Advances," Various speakers. Tuition is \$55 if received before noon on Sept. 23; \$75 after. Los Angeles Marriott Hotel. Info: (800) 872-1119

## Thursday, Sept. 29

**9 a.m. – 3 p.m.** Ming Hsieh Institute Symposium. USC President C. L. Max Nikias will deliver the welcoming address. NRT Aresty Aud. RSVP deadline: Sept. 15. [usc.edu/esvp](http://usc.edu/esvp) (code hsieh). Info: (213) 740-6709

## Monday, Oct. 3 – Wednesday, Oct. 5

**7 a.m. – 5 p.m.** USC Partners in 2011 World Stem Cell Summit. Various speakers and presenters. Pasadena Convention Center. Info: (323) 442-2605

**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](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.



Kukla Vera



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Jon Nalick



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## Back to School

New and returning students flocked to campus in mid-August, greeted with annual rituals including white coat ceremonies, summer picnics and parties. Clockwise from top: USC School of Pharmacy associate professor Tien Ng presents Pharm.D. student Ravi Timbawala with a white coat on Aug. 28 during a ceremony that welcomed 191 new students into the doctor of pharmacy degree program; Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito chats with Physician Assistant Program students at a picnic at the Alhambra Campus on Aug. 17; Medical Student Megan Loo, performs an "Operation" at a reception for new students on Aug. 11; Shalena Burnett (left) and Sona Doshi jump for joy after winning the beanbag toss at the Keck School reception for returning medical school students.

## ONLINE EXTRAS

Read more HSC news online:

• **USC creates new center to forge connections between entertainment technology innovation and improved health**  
<http://tinyurl.com/4y9mlv5>

• **USC researcher discovers mechanism responsible for advancement of myeloma**  
<http://tinyurl.com/3tkn3ey>

• **Epigenome update: Study finds regulatory role for nucleosome-depleted regions on genes**  
<http://tinyurl.com/3dkvnt6>

• **Children's Hospital Los Angeles researchers define key protein components involved in lung repair**  
<http://tinyurl.com/3dnztcr>

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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.