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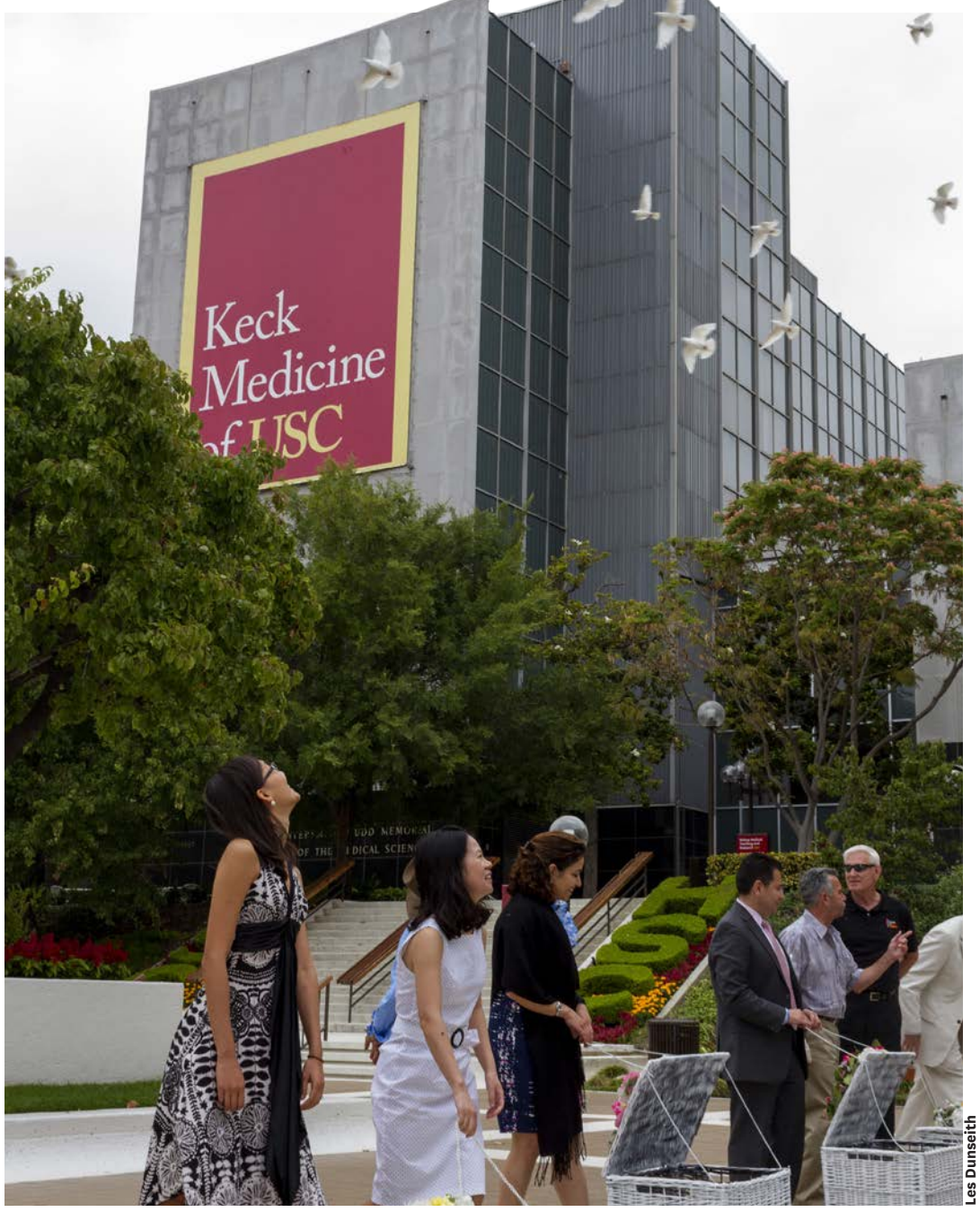


Les Dunseith

The release of 100 doves signifies the message of hope and survival at the 2015 Festival of Life.

Cancer survivors, loved ones celebrate at Festival of Life

By Douglas Morino

They came together to celebrate survival in the face of fear and uncertainty.

For the hundreds of cancer survivors who gathered at the Keck Medical Center of USC on a recent Saturday morning, the Festival of Life was more than that: It was a celebration of hope, perseverance and a new year of living each day to the fullest.

"Cancer gives you a real appreciation for what life is really all about," said emcee Art Ulene, MD, a USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center advisory board member and former "Today Show" medical correspondent.

The June 6 event marked the 25th annual Festival of Life, an event honoring cancer survivors and their loved ones.

Ulene, who went through his own cancer scare, hosts the festival each year. He urged cancer survivors and their loved ones to appreciate their lives and strive to make each day a new beginning.

See **FESTIVAL**, page 5

Photos courtesy of CHLA

Physicians and nurses from CHLA and Keck Medicine of USC led the effort to separate six-month-old conjoined Haitian twins.

Conjoined twins in Haiti separated by USC surgeons

By Lorenzo Benet, CHLA

An 18-member team of physicians and nurses from Keck Medicine of USC and Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA) recently led an international collaboration to separate a pair of six-month-old conjoined twins in Haiti, the first such operation ever performed in that country.

The twins, Marian Dave-Nouche Bernard and Michelle Dave-Nouche Bernard, were born as one on Nov. 24, 2014. They were separated May 22 of this year during a seven-hour surgery at University Hospital of Mirebalais, which is in a poor rural community about 36 miles northeast of Haiti's capital city, Port-au-Prince.

"The girls are doing fantastic," said Haitian-born surgical team leader Henri Ford, MD, MHA, the surgeon in chief at CHLA, who is also vice dean for medical education and a professor and vice chair for clinical affairs at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. "It was an extremely exhilarating day; not only did our preparations pay off and the surgery succeed in spectacular fashion, but this was also a time to put politics aside and celebrate our national pride."

Marian and Michelle — so-called omphalopagus twins who were connected at the abdomen — are actually triplets (sister Tamar was born separately and is healthy).

Surgeon Henri Ford holds the twins after the operation.

The conjoined sisters had faced each other since birth, but they recuperated in separate beds in the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit. They were ready to be discharged 12 days after surgery.

"We anticipate Marian and Michelle will recover fully and go on to lead healthy and happy lives," Ford said.

Conjoined twins occur in roughly 1 in 200,000 births, and omphalopagus twins represent about 30 percent of all conjoined twin births. As triplets, these girls are considered even rarer, occurring about once in 1 million births. Fused together by the breastbone (or xiphoid bone) in the lower portion of the sternum, Marian and

See **TWINS,** page 4

Sheriff's deputy truly gives of himself to help ailing colleague

By Douglas Morino

It's a story that began with a conversation on a treadmill, led to an operating room table and ended with the gift of life.

For veteran Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies Javier Tiscareno and Jorge Castro, it's a story of friendship, extraordinary generosity and perseverance in the face of terminal disease.

"He's given me life," Castro said a week after undergoing a successful operation to replace his diseased liver with part of Tiscareno's. "It's something he did out of his heart, and it's something that I will never be able to repay."

The two law enforcement officers took part in a living donor transplant performed June 4 at Keck Hospital of USC during which Tiscareno donated part of his liver to save Castro, who had been diagnosed with a rare illness that was attacking his own liver.

Donning black USC t-shirts, Tiscareno and Castro shared their story June 11 during a news conference alongside Keck Medicine of USC CEO Tom Jackiewicz,

See **TRANSPLANT**, page 4

Les Dunseith

In gratitude, liver transplant recipient Jorge Castro places a hand on the shoulder of fellow sheriff's deputy and organ donor Javier Tiscareno during a news conference with doctors Saro Khemichian and Yuri Genyk.

Former Keck Medicine leader is new nursing chief at USC-VHH

A Keck Medicine of USC nursing veteran has returned to the organization to lead USC Verdugo Hills Hospital's nursing staff.

Theresa Murphy, RN, MSHA, CENP, joined USC-VHH on June 1 as chief nursing officer to lead the hospital's nursing and patient care activities. Murphy spent one year as assistant chief nursing officer at St. Vincent Medical Center.

Murphy takes on this role following the resignation of former USC-VHH CNO Janet Brooks.

"We thank Janet for her dedication and years of service to our organization," said Paul Craig, RN, JD, interim CEO of USC-VHH and chief administrative officer of Keck Medicine of USC. "We wish Janet much success and, with Theresa, remain focused on maintaining a strong leadership team to support the delivery of compassionate, innovative, high-quality care."

Murphy brings more than 20 years of experience in health care, including a decade working for Keck Medical Center of USC. During her tenure, she served in several nursing leadership roles, including nurse executive at USC Norris Cancer Hospital and associate administrator of nursing for the Keck Medical Center of USC.

Theresa Murphy, RN

"The organization has grown by leaps and bounds in the last year, and it's exciting to be back at such a pivotal time in our organization's history," Murphy said. "I'm really looking forward to working with new and familiar faces to build upon the already strong, 40-year tradition of excellent nursing and patient care at USC-VHH."

Murphy holds a bachelor's in nursing from Cal State Los Angeles and a master's in health care administration from Cal State Long Beach. She is also certified in executive nursing practice by the American Organization of Nurse Executives.

Calendar of Events

Friday, June 19

9 a.m-5 p.m. Ophthalmology Symposium. "USC Eye Institute 40th Anniversary Symposium," various speakers. Steven S. Koblik Education and Visitor Center, Rothenberg Hall, The Huntington, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino. Enter the parking lot via Allen Avenue Gate. Info and RSVP: Lina Poyzner, (323) 442-6383, lina.poyzner@med.usc.edu

Monday, June 22

Noon. KSOM Research Seminar Series. "Converging the Physical and Biological Sciences to Improve Cancer Therapy," Shannon Mumenthaler, PhD, USC. Aresty Auditorium. Info: Mary Jane Chua, (323) 442-7732, maryjane.chua@med.usc.edu

Thursday, June 25

12:30 p.m. Molecular Imaging Center Seminar. "3D Visualization: Introduction to Amira and Avizo Image Analysis Software." Harkness Auditorium. Includes one-on-one sessions after the seminar — bring your own datasets. Info and RSVP: Tautis Skorka, (323) 442-3858, skorka@usc.edu, http://mic.usc.edu

Friday, June 26

Noon. Pharmacology and Phamaceutical Sciences Seminar. "Toward In-Vivo Membrane Fusion Using a Biomimetic Model System," Alexander Kros, PhD, Universiteit Leiden, Netherlands. John Stauffer Pharmaceutical Sciences Center, PSC B13. Info: Ruth Ballard, (323) 442-3400, ellisbal@usc.edu

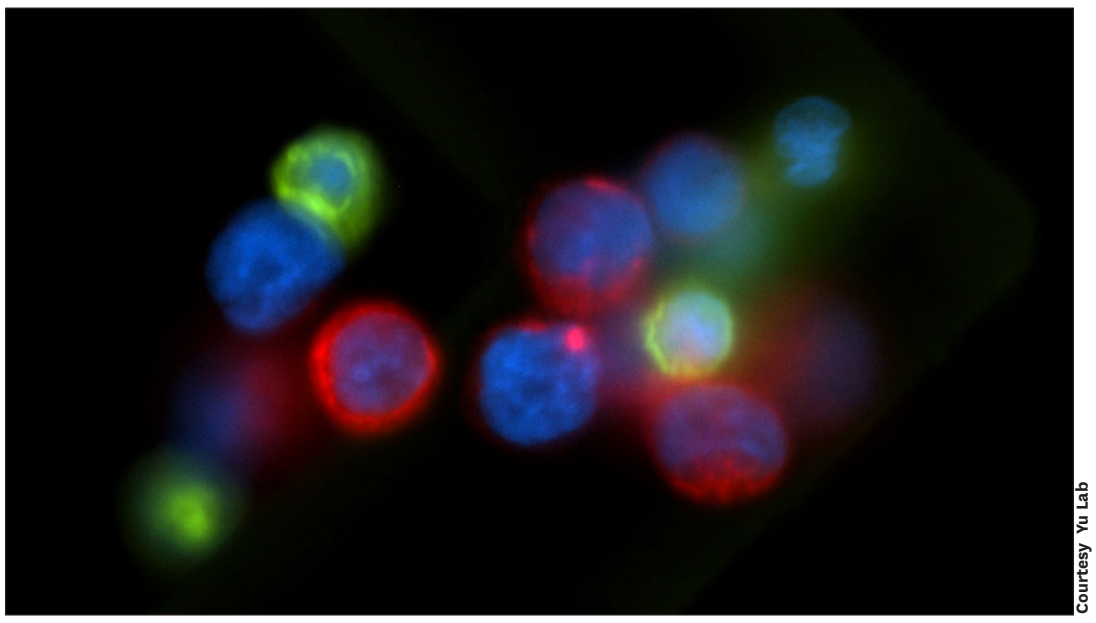
Monday, June 29

Noon. KSOM Research Seminar Series. "Beyond 'There's an App for That'," Ida Sim, MD, PhD, University of California, San Francisco. Aresty Auditorium. Info: Mary Jane Chua, (323) 442-7732, maryjane.chua@med.usc.edu

Thursdays, Sept. 10-Oct. 29

8 a.m. Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute, Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, Preventive Medicine and Children's Hospital Los Angeles. "Introduction to Clinical and Translational Research Study Design" course at HSC and CHLA campuses for residents, fellows and junior faculty members as an introduction to clinical research methods. Info and RSVP: Jeanne McKean, (323) 442-8281, WD@sc-ctsi.org

Notice: Calendar items are due at least 10 days before publication date. Timely submission does not guarantee publication in print. See more calendar entries at *hscnews.usc.edu/calendar-of-events*. Submit items at *tinyurl.com/calendar-hsc*. Include day, date, time, title of talk, first and last name of speaker, affiliation of speaker, location and a phone number/email address.



Courtesy Yu Lab

A cluster of circulating tumor cells (red) and white blood cells (green).

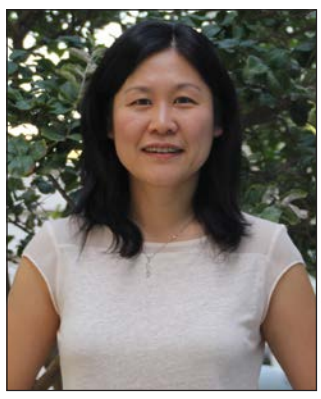
Researcher is named Pew-Stewart scholar

By Cristy Lytal

USC Stem Cell researcher Min Yu, MD, PhD, is one of five early-career scientists to be named a 2015 Pew-Stewart scholar for cancer research. As part of this honor, she will receive $240,000 over four years to advance the understanding of metastatic breast cancer.

"I'm grateful for the support from the Pew-Stewart scholarship, which will provide the resources to propel my research forward," said Yu, an assistant professor in USC's Department of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine and a member of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

As a postdoctoral scholar, Yu devised a technique for growing and multiplying circulating tumor cells (CTCs) in the laboratory after filtering them out from blood drawn from breast cancer patients. CTCs contain a subpopulation of the most deadly cancer cells that have the ability to break away from the primary tumor, enter the blood circulation and form metastases in other tissues, such as the bone, brain and lungs. Metastasis is the leading cause of cancer-related death.



Cristy Lytal

Min Yu

Yu is tackling the problem of metastasis by identifying the molecular adaptations and genetic mutations that allow CTCs to establish new tumors throughout the body. Her work could facilitate the development of strategies for blocking metastatic cancer on a patient-by-patient basis, ultimately saving lives.

Yu has devoted her energies to advancing patient care through innovative medical research for more than 15 years. Born and raised in the city of Qingdao in northeast China, Yu earned her medical degree at Shandong Medical University and completed a yearlong residency in neurology at Peking University Third Hospital.

After working with patients suffering from incurable inherited neurological diseases, Yu recognized the need to find new treatments through medical research. She joined the PhD program in genetics at SUNY Stony Brook University and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, where she developed an interest in breast cancer in the laboratory of Senthil Muthuswamy, PhD. She began researching CTCs during her postdoctoral training in the laboratory of Daniel A. Haber, MD, PhD, at Massachusetts General Hospital.

"During that time, I lost my own father to liver cancer and have completely devoted myself to relieving others from such pain," she said. "As a result, I have dedicated myself to the field of cancer metastasis."

Her dedication as well as her track record of success earned her the recognition as a Pew-Stewart scholar, nominated by the country's leading cancer research institutions and supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Alexander and Margaret Stewart Trust.

Eye Symposium marks 40th year at USC for Ophthalmology

A capacity crowd of almost 400 ophthalmologists and optometrists is expected at a June 19 symposium that will mark the Department of Ophthalmology's 40th anniversary at USC.

The gathering at The Huntington in San Marino represents a "who's who" in ophthalmology from around the country. Hosted by the USC Eye Institute under the direction of Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, the all-day symposium will be opened by USC president C. L. Max Nikias, PhD. Thomas E. Jackiewicz, MPH, senior vice president and CEO of Keck Medicine of USC, and Dean Carmen A. Puliafito, MD, MBA, of the Keck School of Medicine of USC will also be in attendance.

Among its distinguished panelists are Stanley Chang, MD, professor of ophthalmology at Columbia University Medical Center, and M. Roy Wilson, MD, MS, president of Wayne State University. The agenda includes other speakers from USC and from institutions such as Stanford University School of Medicine and the University of California, San Diego.

NIH Big Data grant will fund visual analysis project

A USC project to visualize and analyze connectivity networks in the mouse brain is among 15 new awards from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) tied to the development of biomedical Big Data applications.

Hong-Wei Dong, PhD, associate professor of Neurology in the USC Mark and Mary Stevens Neuroimaging and Informatics Institute at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, will further develop software known as the Connection Lens to enable automated and visual analysis of the massive data sets accumulated by the Mouse Connectome Project, according to an NIH new release. Dong and his colleagues will also develop a new software tool known as the Projection Lens to enable the production of comprehensive connectivity diagrams.

These tools will enable researchers to drill down from comprehensive views to visualize connections between regions of interest in the mouse brain.

The awards come from an NIH initiative to fund innovative approaches to common challenges in biomedical data use.

Neural prosthetic device yields fluid motions by robotic arm

By Alison Trinidad

Paralyzed from the neck down after suffering a gunshot wound when he was 21, Erik Sorto now can move a robotic arm just by thinking about it.

Through a clinical collaboration among Caltech, Keck Medicine of USC and Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, Sorto at 34 is the first person to have a neural prosthetic device implanted in a region of the brain where intentions are made, giving him the ability to perform a fluid hand-shaking gesture, drink a beverage and even play "rock, paper, scissors" using a robotic arm.

Neural prosthetic devices previously have been implanted in the brain's movement center, the motor cortex, allowing patients with paralysis to control the movement of a robotic limb. The motion, however, is delayed and jerky. Now, by implanting neuroprosthetics in the posterior parietal cortex (PPC), a part of the brain that controls the intent to move, Caltech researchers have developed a way to produce more natural and fluid motions.

Designed to test the safety and effectiveness of this new approach, the clinical trial was led by Caltech professor and principal investigator Richard Andersen, PhD, neurosurgeon Charles Liu, MD, professor of neurological surgery, neurology and biomedical engineering at USC, and neurologist Mindy Aisen, MD, chief medical officer at Rancho Los Amigos.

The device was surgically implanted in Sorto's PPC at Keck Hospital of USC in 2013, and he since has been training with Caltech researchers and staff at Rancho Los Amigos to control a computer cursor and a robotic arm with his mind. The researchers saw just what they were hoping for: intuitive movement of the robotic arm.

Sorto, a single father of two who has been paralyzed for more than 10 years, was thrilled with the results.

"I was surprised at how easy it was [to control the robotic arm]," he said. "I remember just having this out-of-body experience, and I wanted to just run around and high-five everybody."

Photos by Lance Hayashida / Caltech

Erik Sorto meets with doctors from his clinical trial: Richard Anderson, top left, Charles Liu and Mindy Aisen.

Erik Sorto uses a robotic arm to grasp a cup just by thinking about it.

Keck Medicine of USC surgeons performed the unprecedented neuroprosthetic implant in a five-hour surgery on April 17, 2013.

Liu and his team implanted a pair of small electrode arrays in two parts of the posterior parietal cortex — one that controls reach and another that controls grasp. Each 4-by-4 millimeter array contains 96 active electrodes that, in turn, record the activity of single neurons in the PPC. The arrays are connected by a cable to a system of computers that process the signals to decode the brain's intent and control output devices, such as a computer cursor and a robotic arm.

"These arrays are very small so their placement has to be exceptionally precise, and it took a tremendous amount of planning — working with the Caltech team to make sure we got it right," said Liu, who also is director of the USC Neurorestoration Center and associate chief medical officer at Rancho Los Amigos. "Because it was the first time anyone had implanted this part of the human brain, everything about the surgery was different: the location, the positioning and how you manage the hardware. Keep in mind that what we're able to do — the ability to record the brain's signals and decode them to eventually move the robotic arm — is critically dependent on the functionality of these arrays, which is determined largely at the time of surgery."

The USC Neurorestoration Center's primary aim is to turn scientific discoveries into effective therapies.

"We are at a point in human research where we are making huge strides in overcoming a lot of neurologic disease," said Christianne Heck, associate professor of neurology at USC and co-director of the USC Neurorestoration Center. "These very important early clinical trials could provide hope for patients with all sorts of neurologic problems that involve paralysis such as stroke, brain injury, ALS and even multiple sclerosis."

Sixteen days after his implant surgery, Sorto began training sessions at Rancho Los Amigos, where a computer was attached to the ports extending from his skull to communicate with his brain. Occupational therapists who specialize in helping patients adapt to loss of function in their upper limbs worked with Sorto and the Caltech team daily to help him visualize what it would be like to move his arm again.

Although he was able to immediately move the robot arm with his thoughts, after weeks of imagining, Sorto refined his control of the arm. Sorto now is able to execute advanced tasks with his mind, such as controlling a computer cursor.

Aisen, also a clinical professor of neurology at the Keck School, said that advancements in prosthetics like these hold promise for future patient rehabilitation.

"This research is relevant to the role of robotics and brain-machine interfaces as assistive devices, but also speaks to the ability of the brain to learn to function in new ways," Aisen said. "We have created a unique environment that can seamlessly bring together rehabilitation, medicine and science as exemplified in this study."

Sorto has agreed to continue with the project for a third year. The study has inspired him to continue his education and pursue a master's degree in social work.

"This study has been very meaningful to me," Sorto said. "As much as the project needed me, I needed the project. It gives me great pleasure to be part of the solution for improving paralyzed patients' lives. I joke around with the guys that I want to be able to drink my own beer — to be able to take a drink at my own pace, when I want to take a sip out of my beer and to not have to ask somebody to give it to me. I really miss that independence. I think that if it were safe enough, I would really enjoy grooming myself — shaving, brushing my own teeth. That would be fantastic."

The results of the clinical trial appear in the May 22 edition of *Science*. The trial was funded by the National Institutes of Health, the Boswell Foundation, the Department of Defense and the USC Neurorestoration Center.

Keck Medicine of USC team members include Brian Lee, Heck, Sandra Oviedo, Paul Kim and Meng Law.

Jessica Stoller-Conrad and Deborah Williams-Hedges of Caltech contributed to this story.

Game Day rejuvenates patients awaiting heart transplants

By Douglas Morino

Spending an afternoon playing cards with friends is something many of us would eagerly do without much of a second thought. But for patients awaiting heart transplants at Keck Hospital of USC, a couple of hours outside the 4th floor intensive care unit was much more than an opportunity to socialize and unwind: It was a rare chance to feel normal.

"Many of our pre-heart patients are in the ICU for months, so keeping up their hope and motivation is a top priority," said Nurse Manager Jessica Thomas. "The ICU — with all the beeps and sounds and lights — can become very claustrophobic, confining and lonely."

So a team of Cardiovascular Thoracic Intensive Care Unit (CVTICU) staff members — two nurses, an occupational therapist and a respiratory therapist — recently organized a game session for patients capable of being moved.

Moving patients from their rooms in the ICU is no simple task. The team carefully transported the patients and all their equipment — including IV poles, heart monitors and oxygen tanks.

"One of our team members said it would be nice to get our patients together," Thomas said. "So we made it happen. We reserved a conference room, put together a few tables and played UNO."

Patients laughed with each other and with staff members as they enjoyed freshly made popcorn and played games brought in by Thomas, who has four young children at home.

Those awaiting a new heart can be dealing with a variety of ailments, including cardiac disease, heart malformations or valve infections. They need to be sick enough to need a new organ but well enough to undergo surgery, recover and complete rehab. Patients might be in their room for months at a time awaiting a new heart.

"In this particular unit, we take care of the sickest hearts in the city," Thomas said. "Being able to do something like this and bring our patients together was a really gratifying experience."

After the Game Day, one of the patients received a new heart and has since gone home to recover and rehab. Another patient recently received a new heart and remains in the ICU recovering. A third patient awaits a heart transplant and remains in the ICU. A fourth patient passed away.

Thomas said the impact of such a seemingly simple event was felt across the unit. Staff members hope to coordinate more social events for pre-heart transplant patients.

"Sometimes, patient outcomes are not want what we want them to be," Thomas said. "So being able to make this Game Day happen was tremendous. I'm proud of my staff for their creativity, their perseverance and for doing a difficult job with compassion and grace."

TWINS: Team performs successful surgery in Haiti

Continued from page 1

Michelle also had attached livers that were separated during the procedure.

Their mother, Manoucheca Ketan, 35, gave birth to all three of her daughters after carrying them for 36 weeks. The twins shared a crib until 10 a.m. on May 22, when Ketan and her husband, David Bernard, 31, watched as their infant daughters were wheeled into surgery as one. Ten hours later, after the surgery, the parents wept when they next saw the twins — resting in separate cribs.

"It was an extraordinary moment," Ketan said, describing her reaction when she first saw her separated daughters. "When I first met Dr. Ford, he told me he was confident we could separate my children, but I didn't know how it would turn out when the day started. Now I am feeling a lot of joy and want to recognize and thank the hospital for everything."

The Keck/CHLA team was joined by 12 medical staff from Centres GHESKIO, Hospital Bernard Mevs–Project Medishare and the hospital in Mirebalais, which was led by Maclee Jean-Louis, MD, director of surgery. Ford described the group as an international medical "Dream Team."

The family received free treatment supported by the Haitian Ministry of Health and Partners in Health, an international health organization. Keck Medicine of USC and CHLA covered the travel expenses of the medical team and donated supplies to ensure the success of the operation.

About 90 minutes into the operation, the girls were surgically separated to a burst of applause from the team. Then Marian was moved to an adjacent table.

Wearing red caps, Marian's team of six doctors and nurses hovered over her to close her incision, while Michelle's team worked in yellow caps — coincidentally reflecting the colors of USC. "The mom gave them red and yellow bands months ago to identify them," Ford explained. "They were destined to be separated by Trojan surgeons."

Courtesy of CHLA

The team takes a break in the surgery suite at University Hospital in Mirebalais.

Michelle was wheeled out of the surgery suite at 4:45 p.m., followed by Marian at 4:58 p.m.

"There are surgeries that require the expanded expertise of a [major hospital], but the twins' anatomy and our team's expertise allowed us to undertake the surgery in Haiti, and compile the appropriate resources to do the surgery there safely," explained James Stein, who was lead surgeon during the separation. Stein is associate chief of surgery at Children's Hospital and an associate professor of surgery at the Keck School of Medicine.

The girls underwent 11 separate procedures, with only a few minor complications. Early on, Michelle's heart rate elevated, but the surgeons — Stein, Ford and Aaron Jensen, MD, along with Keck Medicine of USC anesthesiologists Joanna E. Green, MD, an assistant professor of clinical anesthesiology, and Duc Nguyen, MD, an associate professor of clinical anesthesia — remedied the situation by expeditiously separating the livers and individually hydrating the girls intravenously.

One moment during the operation seemed to sum up the enormity of the procedure for Ford. "Their lower chests were connected, so we had to remove a piece of the sternum, the breastbone, and then you could see their lungs and their hearts beating," he recalled.

Forty-eight hours after surgery, the girls were breathing independently, and after 72 hours they were being fed with a combination of breast milk and formula, Ford said.

Ford started recruiting his team in September after initial conversation with doctors in Haiti. Ford and team members made almost monthly trips to Haiti between the November births and the May 22 surgery, checking up on the health of the girls and making sure that the proper human and material resources or equipment were available to safely do the surgery. By March, the team was set and the girls, strong and healthy, were scheduled for the procedure.

In the coming weeks, the girls will recover from their incisions and undergo physical therapy to help strengthen neck muscles weakened from facing in a single direction for such a long time.

"The girls look great; we don't expect any more surgeries," Stein said. "The amazing part for all of us is conducting seven hours of surgery, and then seeing two kids side-by-side, when they used to be just one. It's just awe-inspiring."

The Keck/CHLA team consisted of surgeons Ford, Stein, Hahn and plastic surgeon Andre Panossian, MD; anesthesiologists Green and Nguyen; physician fellows Jamie M. Golden, MD, Aaron Jensen, MD, Ahbishek Karnwal, MD, Joanna Lim, MD, and Christa Grant, MD; registered nurses Caitlin Fitzgibbons, BSN, Jodi Brown, BSN, Jennifer DeVera, BSN, Melinda Dizon, BSN, Maxine Ogbaa, BSN, and Nhu Tran, BSN; and respiratory therapist Dana Baxter, RRT.

TRANSPLANT: Deputy donates 60% of his liver to save colleague

Continued from page 1

Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell and physicians Saro Khemichian and Yuri Genyk.

McDonnell thanked the physicians and nurses at Keck Medical Center of USC, calling the transplant a "tremendous story."

"Somehow, everything aligned," McDonnell said. "It's one of those things that only happens in the movies." He added: "To think that a week ago, this surgery was undertaken and today both of our deputies are able to walk into this room — I would say it's a miracle."

Castro, a 14-year veteran of the Sheriff's Department, received a diagnosis in January 2014 of primary sclerosing cholangitis, a rare autoimmune disease that attacks the liver's bile ducts. Castro's liver was quickly failing. His health situation was dire.

"We realized very soon that there was no cure for this and he needed a liver transplant," said Khemichian, MD, assistant professor of clinical medicine and transplant hepatologist. "We were facing an uncertain future."

Castro was put on the liver transplant list, but his outlook was grim.

"With the way this disease is, he wasn't going to get a transplant any time soon through our usual means," Khemichian said. "We discussed with him the possibility of a living donor."

USC surgeons have performed nearly 300 living donor liver transplants since pioneering the procedure in May 1999, when the first living donor transplant between two adults in California was successfully completed.

Organ donor Javier Tiscerano gets a hug from his wife, Carmen, after telling his story at a recent news conference.

Despite his terminal diagnosis, Castro continued to go to work at Twin Towers Correctional Facility in downtown Los Angeles, where he works with Tiscareno, an 18-year department veteran.

The two deputies where exercising on treadmills when Castro mentioned his illness and his desperate need for a new liver.

"(Tiscareno) is a big jokester and he told me, 'Let's do it this Saturday,'" Castro said. "I said 'I'm not fooling around. This is serious.' He stopped his treadmill and said, 'I'm not fooling around either.'"

The two men talked, and Tiscareno soon decided that if he was a match he would donate part of his liver to his sick colleague.

Photos by Les Dunseith

Keck Medicine of USC CEO Tom Jackiewicz, left, joined L.A. Sheriff Jim McDonnell in praising liver donor Javier Tiscareno and recipient Jorge Castro, shown with doctors Saro Khemichian and Yuri Genyk.

"I'm just so thankful," Castro said.

Tiscareno called his wife, Carmen, to discuss his decision. Although she was initially hesitant, she supported him. Tiscareno contacted USC physicians to begin the testing process. He soon learned he was an ideal candidate.

"After learning that I was a match, I said, 'Let's get this done,'" Tiscareno said. "I could already see the wear and tear on Jorge. It was my understanding that timing was of the essence."

Genyk, MD, associate professor of surgery and surgical director of the liver transplant program at Keck Medicine of USC, said that living donor liver transplants are possible because the human liver can regenerate from healthy tissue. During the 11-hour surgery, Tiscareno had about 60 percent of his liver removed. In about two months, the livers of both men are expected to grow back to their normal size.

"The operations went successfully and both deputies have recovered," Genyk said.

The deputies have received hundreds of letters of support from well wishers and have gone on to form a strong bond. They are expected to return to work once they make a full recovery in about two months.

After the surgery, Castro's young children visited Tiscareno in his room at Keck Hospital to thank him for saving their father's life.

"That gave me so much happiness," Tiscareno said. "I'm thankful to have him here. May the rest of his life be long, healthy and prosperous."

As Joan Silver adds a message to a banner memorializing tales of survival, Kia McNaughton plays along.

Cancer survivor Teruko Kawada pauses with son Klas and husband Nori for a photo with USC mascot Traveler during the 2015 Festival of Life.

The 2015 Festival of Life was a celebration for all ages.

Photos by Les Dunseith

FESTIVAL: Cancer survivors are celebrated

Continued from page 1

"We often take so much for granted, like life itself," Ulene said to attendees during a ceremony featuring guest speakers, live music and a magician. "So every morning when you wake up, remember this day and live your life really well."

The Festival of Life is hosted by the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and is held every June in the Harry and Celesta Pappas Quad in conjunction with National Cancer Survivors Day. This year's event featured about 750 cancer survivors and family members, 100 white doves, 50 volunteers, a six-member brass band and an Andalusian horse (and USC mascot) named Traveler.

The event serves as an opportunity for current and former USC Norris patients to celebrate life and catch up with physicians, nurses and staff who joined them on the journey through cancer treatment and recovery.

Attendee Raphael Martinez was diagnosed with colon cancer 12 years ago and treated at USC Norris.

"I'm here to celebrate life," said Martinez, who attends the festival each year. "I look forward to the opportunity to come back to USC and celebrate with my family and other survivors."

Attendees, many wearing blue flower leis, sipped coffee and chatted as they strolled through the quad, stopping by information booths from organizations such as the American Cancer Society and Cancer Support Community in Pasadena. Many attendees posed for pictures with Traveler, the USC mascot, as the sounds of the Bayou Brass Band echoed across campus.

Also on hand was Alex Morrison, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1987 and celebrated his 92nd birthday on June 5. Along with the care he received by USC Norris physicians, Morrison attributed his longevity to an active life and a positive attitude.

"At the time, I looked at the diagnosis like there was not much I could do about it and I accepted it," said Morrison, an Eagle Rock resident and USC alum ('49). "I learned that no matter where you are in life, you can always use some help. Today I feel great."

With help from volunteers he recruited from the crowd, magician Harvey Simpson drew plenty of laughs during the Festival of Life.

Two doctors provided special music at the celebration. Christina To, MD, a fellow in hematology/oncology, plays the violin, as Shelly Bian, MD, a resident physician in radiation/oncology, accompanies her on keyboards.

Former "Today" show contributor Art Ulene served as emcee for the event, which also featured speeches by cancer survivors Joe Amaral and Rick Huff, plus words of inspiration from USC physician Afsaneh Barzi.

There are 14.5 million cancer survivors in the United States — a number that is expected to climb to almost 19 million by 2024, according to the American Cancer Society.

Gordon Case, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1998, has attended the Festival of Life with his wife, Amaryllis, for the past 12 years. Together, they make the eight-hour drive each June from Yuba City in Northern California to the Health Sciences Campus to visit with USC Norris staff members and other cancer survivors.

"The physicians and nurses here truly did save my life," Case said, adding that he was able to see the birth of his eight grandchildren after receiving treatment. "Everybody here today has had the same experience. We don't have to tell our stories, because we just know. It's truly like being a part of another family."

The ceremony concluded with a release of 100 white doves. As the birds soared, dark gray clouds began to make way for blue skies.

One of the featured speakers was Rick Huff, who received a diagnosis of prostate cancer two years ago. He shared his journey with those in attendance, adding that thanks in part to the care he received at USC Norris, he was able to witness the birth of his first grandson 21 months ago.

"God had another plan for me," said Huff, who credited his family, friends and faith for helping him on his cancer journey. "I think that plan was to be here to watch my grandson grow."

Huff told the crowd: "A cancer diagnosis is scary. But when you have positive people to surround yourself with, the journey becomes much easier."

HSC Newsmakers

A roundup of news items related to Keck Medicine of USC, which may include philanthropic donations, research grants, publication in academic journals and mentions in the news media:

Courtesy of Kathryn Challoner

As a truck unloads school supplies and rice in a Liberian village devastated by Ebola, a little girl speaks to Kathryn Challoner.

Doctor gets humanitarian award

Kathryn Challoner, MD, FACEP, voluntary faculty in the department of emergency medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, was recently awarded the 2015 Humanitarian Award by the California Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians. Challoner spent several months treating Ebola patients in a rural hospital in Bong County, Liberia. She is also establishing an Ebola orphan relief project with Liberian colleagues. Challoner has a long-standing commitment to medical assistance in Africa and made several trips to Liberia prior to the Ebola outbreak. She had also visited Ghana to conduct workshops on emergency medicine and directed an exchange program at LAC+USC Medical Center that brought Ghanian doctors to Los Angeles to learn emergency medicine.

Go inducted as ACR fellow

John Louie Go, MD, has been inducted as a fellow in the American College of Radiology (ACR). The induction took place at a convocation ceremony during the ACR meeting May 17–21 in Washington, D.C. Go is director of head and neck imaging and an assistant professor of radiology and otolaryngology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. He is member of the ACR, the California Radiological Society and is past president of the Los Angeles Radiological Society and the Western Neuroradiological Society. He is a member of the American Society of Neuroradiology and chairs the Technical Exhibits Committee and Computer Science and Informatics Committee, besides serving on the Executive and Program committees.

Javdar is voted president of national nuclear medicine society

Javdar

Hossein Javdar, MD, PhD, was elected as the 2015-16 president of the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging (SNMMI) during its annual meeting June 6-10 in Baltimore. Jadvar, an associate professor of radiology and biomedical engineering at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, has a clear agenda, according to a news release from the society. "Over the next year, I will focus on developing appropriate-use criteria and devising methods for quantifying the quality and value of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging in this era of evidence-based medicine. I will also work to facilitate the timely clinical translation of novel radiotracers," Jadvar said. Specifically, he plans to encourage activities that will increase the appropriate utilization of targeted radioisotope therapy. Jadvar has been an attending physician at Keck Medical Center and a member of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center since 1999.

Medical student earns fellowship

Timothy Wen, a third-year medical student at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, has been named as a Medical Student Fellow by the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS). The organization is dedicated to advancing neurosurgery by inspiring and facilitating scientific discovery and its translation to clinical practice, according to its website. CNS Fellowship Awards are meant to defer some of the costs recipients incur during their research and to enhance the education of neurological surgeons at all stages of their careers. As a medical student, Wen has studied factors associated with neurosurgical outcomes and utilization patterns in a variety of neurosurgical subspecialties. With the CSNS/CNS fellowship, Wen plans an epidemiological study analyzing the factors, specifically racial and socioeconomic, associated with delay in treatment of cauda equina syndrome on a national level. His research mentors include William Mack, MD, associate professor of neurological surgery and director of the neurointerventional program; Arun P. Amar, MD, associate professor of clinical neurological surgery and director, endovascular services; and Steven Yong Cen, PhD, assistant professor of research neurology.

New award honoring compassionate care is established by USC doctor Etan Chaim Milgrom

By Douglas Morino

Steve Cohn

Dean Carmen A. Puliafito, left, joins Etan Chaim Milgrom, right, to present the inaugural award for compassionate care to Joshua Sapkin at the Keck School of Medicine commencement.

The Etz Chaim Tree of Life Award of Compassionate Care, made possible thanks to a generous gift from Etan Chaim Milgrom, MD, MS, was presented for the first time during recent commencement ceremonies at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

The annual award will recognize, in perpetuity, a Keck Medicine faculty or staff member who strives to improve the health and lives of patients through compassionate care with integrity, excellence, respect and empathy.

Milgrom, a USC alumnus and a clinical professor of family medicine and pediatrics, has dedicated his career to helping medical students and residents understand the importance of extending empathy toward patients.

Milgrom had recent life-saving surgery at Keck Hospital of USC. Grateful for the world-class care he received, Milgrom created the award to honor those who go above and beyond to improve the health and lives of patients by consistently delivering compassionate care.

"When you become ill like I did, the experience as a patient teaches you how to be a more caring and compassionate doctor," said Milgrom, a physician at the USC Engemann Student Health Center at the University Park Campus. "Physicians should always be working to find ways to make their patients more comfortable in both the diagnostic evaluations and treatments they provide and inculcate these principles with medical students and residents."

Milgrom created the award to give compassionate care a name, a face and the recognition it deserves.

The inaugural recipient of the award, Joshua Sapkin, MD, said, "Compassionate care is not something that's often tangible or given recognition."

Sapkin, who earned his doctorate from USC, is an assistant professor of clinical medicine and associate program director of the internal medicine residency program. He was given the award during the May 16 commencement at the Galen Center.

"But it's one of the main reasons we go into our profession and strengthens the relationships we build with our patients," Sapkin said.

Sapkin was selected by Keck School of Medicine Dean Carmen A. Puliafito, MD, MBA. Future winners will be chosen by a committee chaired by Milgrom and comprised of faculty, staff, students and resident physicians. Award winners will serve on future committees.

"The Etz Chaim Tree of Life Award of Compassionate Care serves as an ideal for our students to aspire toward as they graduate from the Keck School of Medicine of USC and enter the field of medicine," said Puliafito. "Dr. Sapkin has demonstrated throughout his distinguished career the best Keck Medicine of USC has to offer in compassionate, personalized health care. He serves as a shining example of the kind of physician that students should strive to become."

Sapkin completed his internal medicine residency at LAC+USC Medical Center and joined the faculty in July 2001. The primary care physician said he sets out to build long-lasting, positive relationships with each of his patients, and works with them as they set their personal health care goals.

"We build relationships with patients and we follow them through the years, sticking by them through thick and thin," Sapkin said. "We provide emotional support, advice and consultation. But we also need to do more — we need to show them compassion."

Sapkin said he considers himself an "old school" physician and that the value of true compassion can be overlooked in a world fueled by modern technology.

"We have so much technology these days to diagnose and treat patients, but the ability to connect with a patient and show compassion can never be overvalued," Sapkin said.

Medical student honored by AMA

Maria de Fátima Reyes of the Keck School of Medicine of USC is among 21 U.S. medical students to receive 2015 Minority Scholars Awards from the American Medical Association (AMA) Foundation.

The program promotes diversity, encourages the elimination of health care disparities and helps alleviate the cost of a medical education. Recipients are chosen from first- or second-year students in historically underrepresented ethnic groups in the medical profession.

Reyes is a second-year medical student at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. On an AMA web page profiling the recipients, Reyes is described as being excited to begin her clinical education at Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center and looking forward to helping provide health care for underserved areas in Los Angeles.

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