

First-years don white coats



By Amanda Busick

It was a hot afternoon Aug. 12, but spirits were high when a procession of first-year Keck School of Medicine of USC students entered an enormous white tent on the Broad Lawn. They were there to receive some words of wisdom from faculty leadership and — for the first time — don the white coats that are emblematic of their new careers in medicine.

“The white coat that you will receive today is a symbol of the oath that you will take to be a physician. It represents an extraordinary privilege and solemn responsibility that comes along with an ability to heal and serve our community,” said Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, interim dean of the Keck School and director of the USC Gayle and Edward Roski Eye Institute.

The white coat ceremony, carried out annually at the beginning of the school year, is celebratory but weighty, an important milestone that signifies the beginning of their medical career.

The students, their families and the many faculty and staff members in attendance were welcomed by Henri Ford, MD, MHA, vice dean for medical education at the Keck School, who spoke of both the challenges and positive

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Clockwise from above: Student Ruben Guzman smiles during the white coat ceremony; Keck School of Medicine of USC Interim Dean Rohit Varma speaks; students recite the Hippocratic Oath; and students line up to put on their white coats for the first time. For USC School of Pharmacy white coat coverage, see page 4.



Photos by Ricardo Carrasco III

Program invites children to ‘come read with me’

By Meg Aldrich

“Come read with me.” Those can be some of the most powerful words in the development of any child’s ability to read and write. For children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and living in bilingual homes, the “come read with me” invitation becomes even more crucial to literacy development.

That’s why the USC Caruso Family Center for Childhood Communication is getting creative in tackling challenges that children with hearing loss face in learning to listen, talk, read and write. Its innovative program — called “Come Read With Me at USC” — is a three-week summer intervention and grant-funded research project designed to help develop early literacy skills in oral deaf and hard-of-hearing children from bilingual (Spanish-English) homes.

Through the program, USC seeks to support everyone involved in a child’s education — the children, their parents and teachers of the deaf and hard-of-hearing in the greater Los Angeles area.

The program is the creation of an interdisciplinary team of Keck School of Medicine of USC faculty members: educational specialist Debra K. Schrader; audiologist Karen C. Johnson, PhD; speech language pathologist Dianne Hammes Ganguly, MA; and biostatistician Laurel M. Fisher, PhD. From 2013 to present, Come Read With Me at USC has more than 50 children from ages 4.5 to



Daniel Campos, 5, right and Yurianna Lara, 6, back left, take part in a shared reading exercise.

8 years, 41 parents and caregivers from homes in which Spanish is spoken by at least one parent, and 16 full-time teachers and language specialists in special education programs and private practice. The program primarily serves families and educators in Los Angeles and the surrounding area.

The results are promising.

During the summer session, children receive daily lessons in shared reading, dialogic reading, writing and awareness of the sounds of speech. They learn concepts of print and word knowledge developed through interactions with peers, parents and teachers.

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2 Zika proteins responsible for microcephaly ID’d

By Zen Vuong

Researchers have tracked down two Zika proteins potentially responsible for thousands of microcephaly cases in Brazil and elsewhere — taking one small step toward preventing Zika-infected mothers from birthing babies with abnormally small heads.

The Zika virus contains 10 proteins, but only NS4A and NS4B matter when it comes to microcephaly, according to a USC-led study published in the journal *Cell Stem Cell* on Aug. 11. These miscreant proteins, researchers discovered, have two shared life goals: to handicap fetal brain formation and to mobilize their malevolent forces.

Researchers said they are the first to examine three strains of Zika in second trimester human fetal neural stem cells. Previous studies created tiny neural stem cell organoids from adult origin.

The study, a collaborative effort between the virology and neurobiology disciplines, is also the first to examine Zika virus on the molecular level, said Jae Jung, PhD, senior corresponding author and distinguished professor and chair of the Department of Molecular Microbiology and Immunology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

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Report card charts 37 years of cancer diagnoses

By Zen Vuong

Prostate and lung cancer are the No. 1 and 2 cancers among men. Stomach cancer, the third leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide, has been on a steady decline among Koreans and Japanese. Black men have the highest overall rates of cancer. Thyroid cancer — which is relatively treatable — has been on the rise and women are

about three times more likely to contract it than men.

These are a few of the notable nuggets in the most recent *Cancer in Los Angeles County: Trends by Race/Ethnicity 1976–2012*, a book released Aug. 15. The report card includes every cancer diagnosis in the region over the past 37 years — more than 1.3 million. With easy-to-read charts, the book divides L.A.’s population

into 11 ethnic and racial groups to highlight the fact that cancer risk is a result of genetics, environment and behavior.

“Not only are we are telling people what has happened to others in the past, but we are also helping them understand their own future cancer risk,” said Dennis Deapen, DPH, the report’s senior author and a

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Research funding programs available

Keck School of Medicine of USC Interim Dean Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, has announced two funding programs that support the investigation of new research areas. The Pilot Funding Program targets junior and established investigators interested in launching or transitioning to a new area of research. Proposals are due by Sept. 2. The Bridge Funding Program supports principal investigators conducting research that will lead to the securing of new grant awards. Awards are for a period of one year and are renewable with progress and justification. For more information about these funding opportunities, visit <http://keck.usc.edu/research-alerts>. — **Sara Reeve**

Center for Genetic Epidemiology established at the Keck School

By Amanda Busick

Building on its reputation as a major player in genome science, the Keck School of Medicine of USC has established the Center for Genetic Epidemiology under the leadership of Christopher A. Haiman, ScD, professor of preventive medicine.

Genetic epidemiology identifies the genetic factors that contribute to disease. The identification of such factors may be used to uncover novel biology and to classify the population based on risk for screening and disease prevention.

“Given our strong history at the Keck School, a major emphasis will continue to be on cancer,” said Haiman, who also holds the AFLAC Chair in Cancer Research. “However, we plan to widen the research to other diseases as well.”

A major focus will be studying diverse populations that have different risks of developing disease, such as the community surrounding the Keck School.

“Los Angeles is an

optimal environment for such a center, given its large, diverse population,” Haiman said.

The center also will concentrate on the establishment of population-based resources as well as the development and application of genomic methods for understanding the genetic basis of disease.

Over the next five years, faculty recruitment will take place in concert with the departments of Preventive Medicine and Translational Genomics, as well as the Department of Computational Biology and Bioinformatics in the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, to identify stars in the field that support the Keck School’s initiatives in genome research, including precision medicine.

Haiman has been a leader in genetic epidemiology research for more than 10 years, serving as principal investigator and co-principal investigator of significant federal grants including projects from



Chris Haiman

Van Urfalian

the National Institutes of Health and Department of Defense.

His research has contributed to placing the medical school at the forefront of population-based genetic research and he currently is leading a number of genomics consortia of common cancers in men and women of African ancestry as well as being the co-principal investigator of the Multiethnic Cohort.

The center will be located within the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Luncheon celebrates contest participants

By L. Alexis Young

Rod Hanners, COO of Keck Medicine of USC and CEO of Keck Medical Center of USC, recently hosted an R3 Innovation Challenge Appreciation Luncheon to thank more than 100 employees who submitted ideas for the first R3 Innovation Challenge.

The challenge called for innovative ideas that would make an impact on resource utilization and efficiency of care for patients. In addition to implementing the seven winning ideas selected in the challenge, executive leaders are looking at ways to implement many of the other ideas submitted that have promise to improve hospital operations.

The R3 Initiative focuses on providing the right care, right resources and right cost for patients. The competition was orchestrated by the Interprofessional Finance Council and R3 Innovation Challenge Committee, who are planning another innovation challenge to engage employees.

CANCER: Majority of risk can be reduced by yourself, author says

Continued from page 1

professor of clinical preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. “The majority of cancer in Los Angeles is preventable: You can reduce the risk yourself. Let this be a reminder to get appropriate checkups to help identify any cancer early.”

The Los Angeles Cancer Surveillance Program (CSP), a state-mandated database managed by the Keck School and the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, provides scientists everywhere with essential statistics on cancer. About two publications each day cite this large and diverse databank as a resource, said Deapen, who directs the program.

USC’s report card provides evidence of how environmental and lifestyle

choices can alter one’s cancer risk. For instance, Asian women living in Los Angeles experience higher and continuously rising breast cancer risk compared to their counterparts living in Asia.

That’s because breast cancer is more prevalent in developed countries with westernized lifestyles, said Lihua Liu, PhD, lead author and an assistant professor of clinical preventive medicine at the Keck School.

“The message for immigrant populations is very clear,” Liu said. “When they come to this country, their lifestyle changes affect their cancer risk.”

The report card project was funded by the National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Calendar of Events

Friday, Aug. 26

8:30 a.m. Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology Grand Rounds. “Well Women Exams,” Jennifer Israel, MD. LAC+USC Medical Center Inpatient Tower Conference Room A.

11 a.m. Jane Anne Nohl Division of Hematology and Center for the Study of Blood Diseases Grand Rounds. “Statistics For Early Phases in Clinical Trials,” Susan Groshen, PhD. LAC+USC Medical Center Inpatient Tower Conference Room A. Info: Carolyn Castellanos, (323) 865-3913, castellanos_c@med.usc.edu

Saturday, Aug. 27

7:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Department of Orthopaedic Surgery & USC Office of Continuing Medical Education. “2016 USC Orthopedic Surgery-Sports Medicine Football Symposium,” Aresty Auditorium. Info: Teresa Ball, (323) 442-2555, uscme@usc.edu, https://cmetracker.net/KECKUSC/Catalog

10 a.m. USC Verdugo Hills Hospital Seminar. “Advances in Acid Reflux Disease Treatment,” John Lipham, MD, and Kamran Samakar, MD. USC-VHH Council Rooms C and D. Info and RSVP: 818-952-4729, http://bit.ly/2bPY2k6

Tuesday, Aug. 30

5:30 p.m. Department of Ophthalmology Grand Rounds. Walid F. Abdallah, MD, PhD. HCC4 Conference Room, 6th Floor. Info: Lina Poyzner, (323) 442-6383, lina.poyzner@med.usc.edu, http://eye.keckmedicine.org

Wednesday, Aug. 31

Noon. Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute (SC CTSI). “Fall 2016 Pilot Funding Informational Session,” Sarah Hamm-Alvarez, PhD. Norris Research Tower (NRT) LG503/504. Info: Aileen Dinkjian, (323) 442-1087, aileen.dinkjian@med.usc.edu, http://www.sc-ctsi.org/funding

Noon-2 p.m. Office of Research Workshop. “Developing Funded Research Programs,” Randolph Hall. CUB 329, University Park Campus. Info and RSVP: (213) 740-6709, uscscr@usc.edu, http://research.usc.edu/for-investigators/training/fundedresearch/

Thursday, Sept. 1

9:30 a.m. USC Stevens Center for Innovation Seminar. “Introduction to the USC Stevens Center for Innovation,” Randolph Hall, PhD, USC vice president of research, and Jennifer Dyer, executive director of the USC Stevens Center for Innovation. Eli and Edythe Broad CIRM Center Auditorium. Info: Peijean Tsai, (213) 821-6063, peijeant@usc.edu, http://stevens.usc.edu. RSVP: http://www.usc.edu/esvp, Code: stevenscenter

Noon. Keck School of Medicine. “A.P. Giannini Foundation Informational Session,” Sarah Hamm-Alvarez, PhD. Norris Research Tower (NRT) LG 503/504. Info: Aileen Dinkjian, (323) 442-1087, aileen.dinkjian@med.usc.edu, http://www.apgianninifoundation.org. Physician-scientists and junior researchers with 6-36 months of postdoctoral research experience can apply to the A.P. Giannini Foundation 2017 Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Program.

Thursday, Sept. 8

7 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Division of Vascular Surgery & Endovascular Therapy & the USC Office of Continuing Medical Education. “20th Annual Max R. Gaspar, MD Symposium: Vascular Surgery 2016.” Millennium Biltmore Hotel. Info: Teresa Ball, (323) 442-2555, uscme@usc.edu, https://cmetracker.net/KECKUSC/Catalog

1:30 p.m. Keck Medicine of USC Stroke Support Group Meeting. “Research in Physical Therapy and Post-Stroke Rehabilitation,” Rini Varghese, PT, MS. Keck Hospital, 3 North, Day Room (3261 A). Info: Melody Sharifi, (323) 442-0049, msharifi@med.usc.edu. Snacks provided and parking validated.



Ricardo Carrasco III

Keck School of Medicine of USC Interim Dean Rohit Varma, right, gives out a faculty award during the white coat ceremony.

WHITE COAT: Ceremony an honored tradition across medical schools

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experiences to come in medical school and medical practice.

This year’s keynote speaker, Jo Marie Reilly, MD, associate professor of clinical family medicine at the Keck School, gave further context as to why this tradition is important.

“The white coat ceremony is a time-honored tradition across all U.S. medical schools,” she stated in her address. “It’s an opportunity for families and friends and our medical community to come together to bear witness and to celebrate all of you as new medical students who begin their journey as physicians.”

Varma, Ford, Donna Elliott, MD, EdD, senior associate dean for student and

educational affairs, and Raquel Arias, MD, MPH, associate dean of admissions, helped the students put on the coats and welcomed them into the world of medicine with a handshake and a smile.

In addition, several awards were presented at the event, including faculty teaching awards, mentor and resident teaching awards, and an award for the outstanding course for each year. The Master Teachers, faculty members who have been nominated in three separate academic years by medical students for excellence and commitment to teaching, also were acknowledged.

For a complete list of the award recipients, go to hscnews.usc.edu.

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.

Steve Kay to lead USC Michelson Center

By Eddie North-Hager

Steve Kay, PhD, has been appointed to lead the USC Michelson Center for Convergent Bioscience and named the Provost Professor of Neurology, Biomedical Engineering and Biological Sciences.

Kay took a leave last year to serve as the president of The Scripps Research Institute.

“We are delighted to have Steve Kay return to USC to lead our efforts in convergent bioscience,” said USC Provost Michael Quick, PhD. “We are poised to become a leader in this field as we bring together faculty and students from across disciplines to tackle the most critical health issues of our time. USC will fast-track the development of devices and therapeutics that will go a long way toward finding solutions to such health and medical issues as cancer, aging and heart disease. The Michelson Center for Convergent Bioscience is an ambitious effort and one that will succeed with the leadership of Steve Kay.”

In this vital new role, Kay will lead the USC Michelson Center in bringing together interdisciplinary teams of researchers from across the university to



Steve Kay will lead the USC Michelson Center for Convergent Bioscience.

advance our understanding of human health and accelerate the development of new life-saving biomedical devices and therapeutics.

In addition, he will work with deans and faculty to recruit other leading interdisciplinary faculty, develop cutting-edge graduate and undergraduate academic programs. He also will work with the Michelson Advisory Committee and Capital Construction

Development to bring to fruition Michelson Hall, a state-of-the-art facility that will serve as the hub for scientific collaboration in the convergent biosciences.

Kay brings a wealth of experience and a vision of advancing biomedical research to tackle the major challenges of the 21st century. Recognized as one of the world's top experts on circadian rhythms, Kay has published more than

200 papers and has been cited in *Science* magazine's “Breakthroughs of the Year” three times since 1997.

“I am thrilled to be returning to USC to lead the Michelson Center for Convergent Bioscience,” Kay said. “By leveraging talent across our broad community in medicine, engineering and the sciences, we are creating a completely new research ecosystem that will position USC to be a leader in the discovery and development of novel therapeutics and diagnostic devices.”

Kay received his PhD from the University of Bristol in the U.K. In 2008, he was elected as a member of the National Academy of Sciences; in 2009 he was elected as a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; and, in 2010, he was awarded the University of California, San Diego Chancellor's Associates Faculty Award for Excellence in Research.

Additionally, he was chosen to receive the 2011 Martin Gibbs Medal by the American Society of Plant Biologists as recognition for pioneering work in plant sciences and was also recently recognized as a Thomson Reuters Highly Cited Researcher.

Physicians, nurses honored at inaugural patient care awards

By Douglas Morino

Keck Hospital of USC nurses and physicians were honored recently for their commitment to compassion and exceptional patient care at a special dinner and ceremony marking the inaugural USC Choi Family Awards for Excellence in Patient-Centered Care.

Due to a generous gift that established the Choi Family Excellence in Patient-Centered Care Endowment, awards will be given annually to honor nurses, residents, physicians and non-clinical staff who consistently demonstrate the ideals of patient-centered care, compassion and excellence. All members of the Keck Medicine community are eligible for these prestigious awards.

Recipients of the inaugural Choi Family Awards were: Keck Hospital 5 West ICU; Fernando Fleischman, MD; Indika P. Guruge, RN; Patricia Nerad, RN; and Raina Sinha, MD.

Each individual recipient received \$2,000, along with an additional \$2,000 for their department and the team received \$4,000 to be used for programs, training and activities that support and foster the culture of excellence in patient-centered care. Each recipient's name will appear on a perpetual plaque installed in a place of prominence at Keck Medical Center of USC.

“We are deeply grateful to the Choi family for their commitment to patient-centered care,” said Tom Jackiewicz, MPH, senior vice presi-

dent and CEO of Keck Medicine of USC. “From surgeons, physicians, nurses and staff, everyone at Keck Medicine of USC understands that a patient's outcome is deeply influenced by the commitment and communication of our caregivers. We are devoted to making the patient experience beyond exceptional.”

The ceremony, which was held May 25, was marked by a surprise announcement that the Choi family will be making an additional commitment to the endowment.

“Our family experienced first-hand what this institution stands for — respect, compassion, integrity and professionalism,” said Henry Choi, a USC alumnus.

In addition to the USC Choi Family Awards for Excellence in Patient-Centered Care, The USC Choi Family Patient-Centered Care Endowment also has established the USC Choi Family Patient-Centered Care Symposium and the USC Choi Family Patient-Centered Care Program.

The Choi family chose to support the Keck Medical Center Patient Experience Department after a family member received exceptional care from Keck Hospital nurses and physicians, including the recipients of the inaugural award.

“My team and I are very grateful to the Choi family for this endowment,” said Char Ryan, patient experience and employee engagement officer at Keck Medicine.



Teacher Ann Franklin leads a shared reading exercise as part of the innovative “Come Read With Me at USC” program.

READ: Children more engaged in reading, writing at home and increase conversations

Continued from page 1

Parents say their children are more engaged in both reading and writing at home. After a three-week session, youngsters demonstrate increased conversational turn-taking during reading activities and more purposeful interaction during writing activities.

Parents receive 12 hours of group instruction on how to develop their children's reading and writing at home. With this knowledge, they start viewing themselves as change agents who can actively help their children gain literacy skills. They share their new

strategies with other parents, and many families have returned for another summer in the program.

“Parents are hungry for information and knowledge,” said Johnson, who is principal investigator of the research project and an associate professor of clinical otolaryngology-head and neck surgery at the Keck School. “Their enthusiasm is inspiring. As one mother told us: ‘I think I get it — books are where my daughter will gain her wisdom.’”

The 2016 summer session concluded at the end of July.

ZIKA

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“We now know the molecular pathway, so we made the first big step toward target therapy for Zika-induced microcephaly,” Jung said. “Years from now, one shot or a series of shots could target the proteins NS4A and NS4B or their collaborators.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in April confirmed that Zika virus causes microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects, but it was unclear how. Jung and his colleagues explained the molecular mechanisms that lead to the devastating condition.

The miscreant Zika proteins smack a cellular signaling gatekeeper called “Akt-mTOR pathway” until it is disoriented and can no longer properly guard brain development and autophagy regulation, the cell's recycling factories. Autophagy

usually digests and kills pathogens; however, when a family of viruses called flaviviruses (dengue, hepatitis C and Zika) infects a cell, autophagy helps the virus proliferate.

In short, Zika NS4A and NS4B proteins stunt brain development and prod autophagy to mushroom so that the virus could spread. When these two key proteins hijacked fetal neural stem cells, the size of brain organoids were, on average, halved, according to the study.

The research was supported by the Hastings Foundation, Fletcher Jones Foundation, Global Research Lab Program, National Research Foundation of Korea, Alzheimer's Association and Cure for Alzheimer's Fund. Lead author Qiming Liang, PhD, is a special fellow of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and is supported by the Shanghai Institutions of Higher Learning.



Members of the Choi family join Tom Jackiewicz and Rod Hanners to celebrate with the winners of the inaugural Choi Family Awards during a recent ceremony.

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:

Monthly councils to focus on patient, family care

KECK MEDICINE OF USC HAS CREATED TWO new Patient and Family Advisory Councils (PFAC) that will serve USC Verdugo Hills Hospital and USC Care Ambulatory Services. The goal of the councils, which meet monthly, is to focus on patient- and family-centered care; whereby, patients and families collaborate to form true partnerships with their providers. The councils are dedicated to partnering with members of the health care team for guidance on how to improve their experiences. The USC Verdugo Hills Hospital PFAC has chosen, as their first project, to improve the experience of patients and families in the emergency department. The USC Care Ambulatory Services is focusing on improvements to the patient portal. Council members commit two hours each month to help develop programs and policies that are relevant to our patient and family needs, promote advocacy and involvement, and volunteer as PFAC advisors for meetings and process improvement projects. For more information or to apply for membership, email PFAC@med.usc.edu. — **L. Alexis Young**

Hematologist wins award from National Cancer Institute

THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE (NCI) has named Kevin Kelly, MD, PhD, associate professor of clinical medicine in the Jane Anne Nohl Division of Hematology and Center for the Study of Blood Diseases, one of 13 recipients of the 2016 Cancer Clinical Investigator Team Award (CCITA). The award recognizes and supports outstanding mid-career clinical investigators at NCI-designated cancer centers extensively involved in NCI-funded collaborative clinical trials. “This award will allow me to enhance the clinical trials infrastructure at USC Norris, as well as develop novel therapies, particularly for patients with refractory malignancies,” Kelly said. “It is an honor and a privilege to not only be recognized by the NCI, but also to receive the necessary support to continue the fight against cancer.” — **Mary Dacuma**



Kevin Kelly, MD

Ricardo Carrasco III

Multiple sclerosis awareness short film project recognized

LILYANA AMEZCUA, MD, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR of clinical neurology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, and her colleagues recently won an award at the 2016 Annual Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers for a platform presentation of their short film project. *Dentro de Mi* is an eight-minute film featuring Hispanic patients and their perceptions of multiple sclerosis (MS). The short film, which aims to raise MS awareness and foster cultural sensitivity, was recognized in the Platform category for “Best in Patient and Family Care.” Amezcua also was featured in an article in *Momentum Magazine* that discusses her training and research interests, particularly focusing on her work with Latinos with MS. — **L. Alexis Young**

Researcher wins NIH Pathway to Independence Award

YEARS AGO, LINDSEY BARSKE, PhD, pulled on a pair of tall rubber boots and began a journey that led from her college research experience on the muddy Alaskan tundra to her current postdoctoral studies in the USC Stem Cell lab of Gage Crump, PhD. Now, she’s arrived at a key turning point, having received a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Pathway to Independence Award (K99/R00) to help her transition from the postdoctoral to the faculty stage of her career. As the recipient of this nationally competitive award, she will study facial development in zebrafish and mice, in hopes of better understanding human birth defects ranging from cleft palate to prematurely fused skull sutures. “Lindsey is an enthusiastic and insightful researcher who has an eagle eye for the embryo,” said Crump, associate professor of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine at USC. Barske added, “I want to devote my career to an exploration of the developmental mechanisms that sculpt the skull and, when disrupted, lead to craniofacial malformations in human patients.” — **Cristy Lytal**



Lindsey Barske

Cristy Lytal

Meet the Faculty: Eric Chang, MD



Eric Chang rides an URB-E, a foldable electric scooter, down Eastlake Avenue on the Health Sciences Campus.

Ricardo Carrasco III

Get to know the faculty members on the Health Sciences Campus and beyond!

Do you have a special skill or interest that nobody expects? Is there a professor whose hidden talent should be celebrated?

Let us know by emailing hscnews@usc.edu with your nominations for our Meet the Faculty feature and you might see them in a future *HSC News* issue.

Eric Chang, MD, professor and chairman of the Department of Radiation Oncology for the Keck School of Medicine of USC and medical director of radiation oncology services at USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, helped pioneer the use of Gamma Knife technology to treat brain tumors.

When he isn’t saving lives with advanced radiation treatment, you can find him happily racing down Eastlake Avenue on his URB-E, a foldable electric scooter that is convenient, environmentally friendly and exceptionally fun.

“Not only is this a fun and efficient way to get from meeting to meeting, but I get lots of smiles and thumbs up when people see me riding my URB-E,” Chang said. “That’s definitely the part I enjoy most – making people happy.”

Pharmacy students don white coats

By Michele Keller

Taking their first steps in the journey to become doctors of pharmacy, the 188 members of the Class of 2020 strode into the annual USC School of Pharmacy White Coat Ceremony on the Harry and Celesta Pappas Quad.

The first-year pharmacy students, along with their family members and friends, were welcomed Aug. 19 by Interim Dean Glen L. Stimmel, PharmD, who informed them they were joining the profession at an important time when the scope of practice is expanding, putting pharmacists at the forefront of patient care.

“We welcome you into a profession that will give you broad opportunities,” Stimmel said. “Today it’s white coats, in May of 2020 it’ll be caps and gowns. You will be the best educated and skilled pharmacists that we have ever graduated.”

Stimmel also introduced incoming Dean Vassilios Papadopoulos, PharmD, PhD, who officially begins his appointment at the USC School of Pharmacy on Oct. 1.

Papadopoulos challenged the students to think beyond their degree and focus on finding ways they, as future medication-based experts, can innovate and improve the delivery of health care.

“We need to continue to transform and change,” Papadopoulos said.

The keynote speaker for the ceremony was Susie H. Park, PharmD, associate professor of clinical pharmacy, who reflected on her own experience donning a white coat for the first time two decades ago, as a first-year USC pharmacy student in 1996.

“You can never count down your days of learning,” said Park, encouraging students to pause and enjoy the moment. “As my father once told me, ‘You’re never done taking tests.’ You’ll leave here with an education that is as invaluable as time, so make the most of your time.”

The Class of 2020 collectively speaks more than 20 languages, including Arabic, Aramaic, Armenian, Cebuano, Chinese, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi,



USC School of Pharmacy alumna Roslyn Ellison Blake coats first-year pharmacy student Kyle Fischer during the white coat ceremony.

David Sprague

Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Persian (Farsi), Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Twi and Vietnamese.

Fred Weissman, PharmD, JD, associate dean for faculty and student affairs and admission,

called each student to the stage to be officially coated, culminating with the administration of the “Oath of a Pharmacist,” led by Tien M.H. Ng, PharmD, associate professor of clinical pharmacy.

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