



Photos by Steve Cohn

USC President C. L. Max Nikias, left, hands a miniature version of the May S. and John Hooval Dean's Chair in Medicine to Keck School of Medicine of USC Dean Rohit Varma during an installation ceremony held Jan. 25 on the Health Sciences Campus.

Rohit Varma installed as medical school dean

By Douglas Morino

Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, the noted physician and scientist recognized across the globe as a visionary leader in the epidemiology of eye diseases, has been formally installed as dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC and the May S. and John Hooval Dean's Chair in Medicine.

Varma was honored by a standing-room-only crowd of USC officials, staff, faculty and students during a Jan. 25 ceremony on the Health Sciences Campus. He was announced as dean of the Keck School in November, after serving as interim dean of the school since March.

USC President C. L. Max Nikias, PhD, called Varma's appointment as dean a "transformative milestone" for the university and medical school.

"Dean Varma will accelerate us into the future," Nikias said. "Healing, passion and hope — these words speak to the character



Keck School of Medicine of USC Dean Rohit Varma shakes hands with Provost Michael Quick, right, as Varma enters the installation ceremony.

of our new dean. His journey to today's celebration is the result of dedication, determination and a heart that can teach us all about compassion."

Varma, who was joined at the ceremony by his family, said he

will focus on strengthening a spirit of collaboration, creativity, compassion and community among faculty, students and staff.

"There is a sense of real optimism that all of us are on the

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Employee of year: We are advocates

By Douglas Morino

Thank you cards hang on a bulletin board above Gloria Jimenez' workstation inside the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

"You provide me hope of a longer future with my family," reads one. "Many thanks."

The handwritten cards, from grateful patients and family members, serve as a reminder for the important work Jimenez and her colleagues do each day to ensure patients have access to the medications they need.

"We are advocates for our patients," said Jimenez, the Keck Medical Center of USC 2016 Employee of the Year and a pharmacy

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Douglas Morino

Keck Medical Center employee of the year Gloria Jimenez is seen with Cirilo, a pet therapy dog, at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Keck School NIH funding ranking rises

By Cynthia Smith

The Keck School of Medicine of USC recently received the school's highest ranking in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding since the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research began its annual ranking of medical schools in 2006. The rankings represent total NIH funding granted from Oct. 1, 2015, through Sept. 30, 2016, with the Keck School receiving more than \$140.8 million in NIH grants during this time.

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'State of the Cancer Center' presentation points to growth, promising discoveries



Stephen Gruber speaks during the "State of the Cancer Center" presentation on Jan. 17.

Douglas Morino

By Mary Dacuma

The USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center had an outstanding 2016, as reported by Stephen Gruber, MD, PhD, MPH, director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, in his annual "State of the Cancer Center" presentation on Jan. 17.

"The cancer center is flourishing," said Gruber, professor of medicine and H. Leslie Hoffman and Elaine S. Hoffman Chair in Cancer Research at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. "We are growing in faculty, we are growing in publications and we are growing in grants. Most importantly, our science is exceptional."

Funding for USC Norris grew significantly over the

past year, from \$85.6 million in funding, including \$31 million from the National Cancer Institute (NCI), in 2015 to \$104 million in funding, including \$33 million from the NCI, in 2016. The center finished 2016 with a healthy financial operating margin.

The increase in funding is tied to the growth and excellence of USC Norris' faculty. USC Norris now represents 224 faculty members across eight schools within the university, up 3 percent from 2015. Over the past year, these members authored 945 publications, up 29 percent from 2015 and a record number for USC Norris. Of these publications, 31 percent are a result of

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In Memoriam: John Davis, founder of Med-COR program

By Hope Hamashige

John Albert Davis, PhD, former assistant clinical professor of medical education at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, died on Jan. 13. He was 82.

Davis left a lasting mark on the Keck School and the lives of thousands of young people by establishing a nationally recognized program designed to boost the number of minorities in the biomedical sciences, called Med-COR.

Davis joined the Keck School in 1968 as a research associate with responsibility for recruiting and counseling minority students. Med-COR grew out of a realization that diversifying

medical schools required an effort to reach students before college to improve their skills and introduce them to careers in health care.

Initially, 15 students from four inner city Los Angeles Unified School District high schools joined the program, spending Saturdays at the Keck School for tutoring in core skills — math, science and English — that would help them get into college. Davis kicked off the Saturday gatherings with words of encouragement for the students or a short discussion about a topic he thought might help them in the future, such as professionalism in the workplace.

Davis’ son Keith said that Med-COR held a special place in his father’s heart.

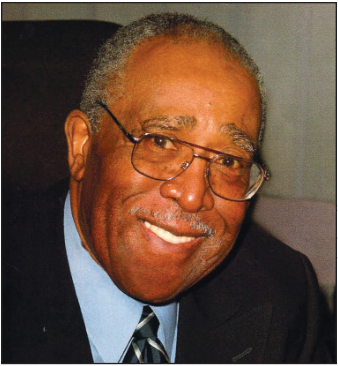
“Med-COR was a big part of our family,” Keith Davis said. The elder Davis spent nearly every Saturday at Med-COR gatherings from 1969 until 2011. In the early years, his wife, Judith, was assistant director and the couple brought their three children to every Med-COR event, including all the Saturday sessions.

Davis’ commitment to diversifying institutions of higher education was born of his own experience as a UCLA student in the 1960s and his involvement in civil rights organizations that connected

the underrepresentation of minority students on campus to the underrepresentation of minorities in many professions, including medicine.

“Dr. Davis was an influential figure in expanding the reach of the Keck School of Medicine into the surrounding communities,” said Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, dean of the Keck School and director of the USC Gayle and Edward Roski Eye Institute. “The effects of his forward-thinking Med-COR program continue to be felt today, as dozens of underrepresented students flourish in college, medical school and beyond.”

John Davis is survived by



John Davis

Courtesy Davis family

his wife, Mamie Davis, who he married after his first wife, Judith, passed away. Three children — Gregory Davis, Deanna Sweeney and Keith Davis — and eight grandchildren also survive him.

INSTALLATION: Varma’s research focuses on minority populations

Continued from page 1

precipice of something amazing,” Varma said. “That feeling is not just found among our faculty, but also among our staff and students.”

Knowing as a child he wanted to follow in his uncle’s footsteps and pursue a career in ophthalmology, Varma earned his medical degree at the University of Delhi, India. He spent his free time volunteering in a leper colony, where he worked alongside Mother Teresa.

Varma, who went on to earn a master’s degree in public health from Johns Hopkins University, has spent much of his career focusing on minority populations. His primary research focuses on epidemiologic studies of eye disease in children and aging populations. He also has been a principal investigator of eye studies focusing on Latino, Chinese-American and African-American populations.

“He is driven by an energy unknown to most people,” Nikias said. “By focusing on minority populations that are all too often ignored, Dr. Varma has cemented his reputation as a trailblazer.”

Varma joined the USC faculty in 1993, obtaining a professorship in 2005 with appointments in ophthalmology and preventative medicine. He is the 23rd dean of the Keck School, the oldest medical school in Southern California.

Varma said he envisions new, strong partnerships being created between the medical school and the university’s other professional schools.

“I have an enduring belief in the power and potential of

“There is a sense of real optimism that all of us are on the precipice of something amazing.

— Rohit Varma

USC to change the world,” Varma said. “I am extraordinarily grateful to be a part of the incredibly supportive community we enjoy at Keck Medicine and, more broadly, across the university. It’s this environment that will be a foundation for our next wave of great accomplishments.”

Varma also touched on the transformative work being done by Keck School faculty and said that physicians must ensure their work embodies compassion.

“The human touch and strong connections with our patients can never be automated,” Varma said. “We must ensure that our medical education instills compassion, empathy and understanding in the physicians of tomorrow, so that the human connections remain at the core of healing.”

In addition to his role as dean of the Keck School of Medicine, Varma serves as director of the USC Gayle and Edward Roski Eye Institute and holds the Grace and Emery Beardsley Chair in Ophthalmology. For the past 10 years, he has been one of the leading recipients of research funding from the National Institutes of Health.



Rohit Varma speaks during a ceremony installing him as the 23rd dean of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, held Jan. 25 at Pappas Quad.

Steve Cohn



Jacqueline Bertole

RIBBON-CUTTING: Janice and Bob Hall recently joined Anthony El-Khoueiry, MD, associate professor of clinical medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, to mark the opening of the Janice and Robert Hall Clinical Trials Biospecimen Laboratory at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. The lab is a result of a generous donation from Janice Hall, one of El-Khoueiry’s former patients, and her fundraising efforts.

Calendar of Events

Friday, Jan. 27

11 a.m. Jane Anne Nohl Division of Hematology and Center for the Study of Blood Diseases Grand Rounds. “Integrating Somatic Mutations Into the Clinical Care of Patients with MDS,” Rafael Bejar, MD, PhD, UC San Diego. LAC+USC Medical Center Inpatient Tower Conference Room A. Info: Carolyn Castellanos, (323) 865-3913, castellanos_c@med.usc.edu

Friday-Saturday, Jan. 27-28

7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Department of Neurosurgery. “6th Annual USC Hands-On NeuroEndoscopy Course for Neurosurgery and Otolaryngology Residents,” Gabriel Zada, MD, MS. Surgical Skills Simulation and Education Center. Info and RSVP: <http://bit.ly/2cJKvJv>

Saturday, Jan. 28

7 a.m.-4:35 p.m. USC Office of Continuing Medical Education. “4th Annual USC Multi-Disciplinary Breast Cancer Symposium.” Intercontinental Hotel. Info: Teresa Ball, (323) 442-2550, uscme@usc.edu, <http://keck.usc.edu/cme/>

Saturday, Feb. 4

9 a.m. USC-IGM Art Gallery Seminar. “To Lead is to Serve — 3-Hour Fundraising Seminar.” IGM Art Gallery. Info and RSVP: Lynn Crandall, lynn.crandall@gmail.com, <http://bit.ly/2iWZxjc/>. Please register online.

Thursday, Feb. 9

8 a.m.-5 p.m. The Saban Research Institute Symposium. “TSRI Annual Symposium: Global Impact of Pollution on Maternal and Child Health Across the Life Span.” Saban Research Building Auditorium, 4661 Sunset Blvd. Info and RSVP: Ritu Gill, (323) 361-8715, <http://bit.ly/2dhxRmL>

Monday-Monday, Feb. 13-March 13

All day. Keck Medicine of USC. “Press Ganey Survey.” Survey available for physicians and staff. Information to come via email.

Tuesday, Feb. 14

7:30 a.m. USC. “State of the University Address,” President C. L. Max Nikias. Aresty

Auditorium. Info: usc.edu/esvp, Code: HSC17, (213) 740-1744

9 a.m.-7 p.m. USC Institute for Global Health. “2017 USC Global Health Case Competition.” Soto I. Info: Mia Poynor, (415) 879-6542, <http://bit.ly/2k227G1>

Wednesday, Feb. 15

Noon. The Saban Research Institute Seminar. “Cardiovascular Development and Regeneration — Zebrafish, Neonatal Mouse and Beyond,” Ching-Ling (Ellen) Lien, PhD. Saban Research Building Auditorium, 4661 Sunset Blvd. Info: <http://chla.org/tecpad>

Thursday, Feb. 16

Noon-1 p.m. The Survivor Art Series. “Exhibit Opening and Art Talk,” Philip Lindquist. The Jennifer Diamond Cancer Resource Library, Harlyne J. Norris Research Tower. Info: (323) 442-7805.

5 p.m. USC Women in Management. “WIM Poets Tea at HSC.” Norris Medical Library West Conference Room. Info and RSVP: <http://uscwim.org/calendar.asp>. WIM members free; non-members \$10.

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.

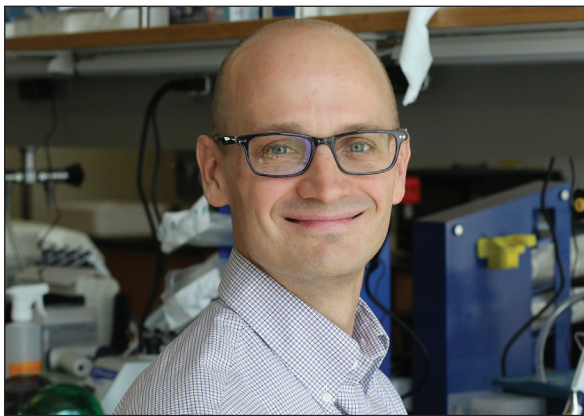
Grant to support study of age-related diseases

Wisdom can increase with age, but healing power does not. USC Stem Cell scientist Joseph T. Rodgers, PhD, is exploring the biology behind this fact, thanks to a grant from the American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR).

The grants provide \$100,000 of flexible support to early-career researchers focused on aging processes and age-related diseases. Since 1981, AFAR, which is a national nonprofit organization, has awarded more than 700 of these awards to junior faculty at the critical juncture in their career development when research funding is most difficult to obtain.

“AFAR has been a cornerstone of aging research,” said Rodgers, assistant professor of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. “As a junior faculty, funding from AFAR means support and encouragement for my thought process and approach to studying aging.”

Rodgers’ project will explore how healing becomes impaired during aging—making a simple injury such as a broken bone a complicated ordeal for many who



Joseph T. Rodgers

are elderly. As stem cells age, they lose their ability to regulate their cellular metabolism, or the chemical reactions needed to maintain life. This diminishes their ability to respond to the chemical signals instructing them to heal and repair damaged tissue. The Rodgers

Lab will investigate both the process of onset and the molecular basis of this dysregulated metabolism in aged stem cells.

Eventually, Rodgers hopes that these discoveries will inform therapies to improve healing in the elderly.

“Support from AFAR is a clear sign of the high quality of research that a scientist is conducting in aging,” said AFAR’s Scientific Director, Steven N. Austad, PhD, distinguished professor and chair of the Department of Biology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Rodgers’ research addresses what is becoming an increasingly important challenge of the 21st century, as demographics shift and more and more Baby Boomers pass their 65th birthdays.

“AFAR’s Biology of Aging Grants,” said the organization’s Executive Director Stephanie Lederman, “help create a career pipeline that is essential to advancing better medicine for age-related diseases and discoveries that will help us all live healthier and longer.”

Electrical stimulation therapy eyed for stroke survivors

By John Hobbs

Could electricity help stroke survivors regain control of their legs and return to mobility?

It’s a question that assistant professor James Finley, PhD, and professor Carolee Winstein, PhD, PT, both from the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy, hope to answer with a new study that could transform the way physical therapists help stroke survivors get back on their feet.

Finley and Winstein recently were awarded an Innovative Research Grant by the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association (AHA/ASA) to study the use of non-invasive electrical stimulation to improve stroke survivors’ walking ability.

The study, titled “TESLA-Stroke: Transcutaneous Electrical Stimulation for Locomotor Ability After Stroke,” builds upon a promising treatment modality called neuromodulation.

It is a treatment during which electrical or magnetic stimulation is applied outside the body to treat problems ranging from spinal cord injury to urinary incontinence to depression.

Finley’s research uses the treatment in a completely different way to treat stroke survivors, applying external non-invasive electrical stimulation directly to the spine, instead of the brain where it is most often used.

“What we’re saying is, ‘Sure the brain is important, but we don’t want to ignore the role of



James Finley and Carolee Winstein

the spinal cord, particularly as it pertains to walking,” Finley said.

If Finley’s proof-of-concept study is successful, it could offer physical therapists a promising new treatment to get survivors of stroke back on their feet.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 795,000 people have a stroke in the United States each year — one every 40 seconds —with more than 600,000 surviving. Stroke is also the leading

cause of serious long-term disability. Finley’s study pairs the stroke rehabilitation expertise of the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy with spinal cord physiology expertise from the Edgerton Neuromuscular Research Laboratory. The lab, part of the University of California, Los Angeles, is led by V. Reggie Edgerton, PhD, who has been studying spinal cord physiology for more than 40 years.

Edgerton and his team have used electrical stimulation to treat patients with spinal cord injury. They have published a number of studies that demonstrate significant changes in lower extremity function as a result of spinal cord electrical stimulation, Finley said.

“We hope to be able to use electrical stimulation the

same way in stroke survivors to actually show some short-term improvements in walking function or even control of the legs,” he added.

The study will be conducted in two phases. First, researchers will focus on asymmetry, determining which segments of the spinal cord, when stimulated, impact which muscle activity patterns in each leg.

Secondly, Finley’s team hopes to find optimal stimulation locations and combinations to help improve lower extremity function.

“If we could, for some subset of stroke survivors, actually improve their walking function beyond what is currently possible with standard techniques, we could imagine this becoming an actual intervention, Finley explained.”

RANKING: Seven departments listed in top 20

Continued from page 1

The departments of ophthalmology and preventive medicine both ranked No. 2 nationally among the nation’s ophthalmology and preventive medicine departments receiving NIH funds.

Overall, seven Keck School departments ranked within the top-20 NIH-funded in their respective departments: microbiology, No. 17; neurology, No. 18; ophthalmology, No. 2; otolaryngology, No. 11; physiology, No. 20; preventive medicine, No. 2; and urology, No. 18.

“The Keck School of Medicine’s current positioning represents the most impressive ranking of NIH funding the school has received to date,” said Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, dean of the Keck School and director of the USC Gayle and Edward Roski Eye Institute. “Our strong performance and rise in rankings reflect the groundbreaking work of our world-renowned faculty, dedicated staff

and committed researchers, including the addition of 19 new principal investigators in the last year.”

The Keck School also ranked No. 1 in NIH funds received per principal investigator. A total of 158 principal investigators received an average of more than \$891,000, securing the school’s top ranking.

“The Keck School’s No. 1 ranking in NIH funds received per principal investigator demonstrates the strength of researchers that we attract at the Keck School,” said Thomas A. Buchanan, MD, vice dean for research at the Keck School. “These competitive grants allow us to further innovate and support our mission to improve the quality of life for individuals and society by promoting health, preventing and curing disease, advancing biomedical research and educating tomorrow’s physicians and scientists.”

genetic factors for multiple myeloma in populations of African and European ancestry.

Future plans that were highlighted include investment in cellular therapy and immunotherapy, as well as continued efforts to strengthen biobanking for all patients at USC Norris.

USC Norris’ clinical volume has grown across all locations. With the opening of the new Norris Healthcare Center, a 116,000-square-foot health center scheduled to open in mid-2017, USC Norris will better serve its increasing volume of patients with even higher standards of clinical care.

EMPLOYEE: Award presented Dec. 14

Continued from page 1

procurement specialist at USC Norris. “To be there with them is the best part of my job.”

She was honored for the Employee of the Year award on Dec. 14 and presented with a check for \$2,500.

Since joining Keck Medical Center in 2010, Jimenez has transformed her job into a front-line role where she works directly with patients, family members, physicians and drug manufacturers to ensure patients receive the medicine they need, regardless if they have been denied by their insurance companies. Jimenez works to get chemotherapy drugs directly from manufacturers, helping patients get medications they otherwise wouldn’t while saving the medical center more than \$1.6 million in insurance costs.

Jimenez was nominated for employee of the month seven times and was recognized for her positive attitude, professionalism, efficiency, leadership and sense of ownership among other qualities, said Rod Hanners, CEO of Keck Medical Center of USC and COO, Keck Medicine of USC.

“Gloria is an ambassador and liaison to patients and physicians and was instrumental in creating a patient assistance program for our cancer patients,” Hanners said. “She has helped more than 50 cancer patients access treatment, and assisted

patients with receiving funding to help with their financial burden, and getting hotel accommodations for patients with high-risk outpatient treatments.”

Jimenez’ role not only included facilitating paperwork and applications for patients, it includes working directly with physicians, helping family members navigate the often-complex insurance hurdles and comprehend emotionally difficult diagnosis and collaborating with her colleagues to ensure the correct medications are delivered to patients.

Her work often transcends the pharmacy. She was named Employee of the Month in June by a USC Norris staff member after helping non-English speaking family members of a patient diagnosed with lymphoma understand the diagnosis and his health care plan. She often visited the patient in his room to ensure he was eating well and had access to the food he wanted. She recently received a thank you note from the family members of the patient, who were once considering hospice care for their loved one. He is now cancer free.

Jimenez said working with young cancer patients has had a tremendous impact on her work.

“I see them, and I see myself,” she said. “I never end the day without feeling grateful for the opportunity to work for our patients.”

PRESENTATION

Continued from page 1

inter-programmatic collaborations, reflecting multidisciplinary work toward new therapies and discoveries.

Gruber also highlighted key research and accomplishments toward USC Norris’ strategic goals, specifically the development and delivery of precision medicine, and the acceleration of precision care in Los Angeles’ ethnically diverse populations. One such project is the first study in humans using circulating tumor cells as a biomarker for greater response to cancer treatment. Yet another study examined

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:



Kate Wilber, Supervisor Hilda Solis, Allison Young, Bella Chan and Richard Franco stand with the scroll presented to the Los Angeles County Elder Abuse Forensic Center at the Board of Supervisors Meeting on Dec. 6.

L.A. County Supervisors honor elder abuse watchdog group

THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD of Supervisors recently honored a group of USC faculty members who work to protect vulnerable seniors from elder abuse. Diana Homeier, MD, associate professor of clinical family medicine and director of the geriatric medicine fellowship training program at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, and the Los Angeles County Elder Abuse Forensic Center (LACEAFC) were honored for 10 years of service at the Dec. 6 Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors meeting. First District Supervisor Hilda Solis acknowledged the forensic center’s role in working with 12 county and city agencies to create better outcomes in cases of elder abuse. “Adult Protective Services and the District Attorney’s Office have been especially committed to the success of the forensic center,” Solis said. “Over 1,300 of the most egregious cases of abuse and neglect have been handled at the center, and the team has significantly improved the health outcomes and protections for vulnerable elders and dependent adults.” — **Claire Norman**

Professor fights opioid epidemic with award-winning app

TALIB OMER, MD, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR of clinical emergency medicine and director of emergency ultrasound medical student elective at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, was part of a team of entrepreneurs working for California-based tech-startup PwrDBy that won a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) contest to develop an app that would help combat the opioid epidemic. OD Help is an Uber-like service that would link enrolled carriers of Naloxone to people who are suffering an opioid overdose. Naloxone can rapidly reverse an opioid overdose, but only when administered quickly. OD Help was unique from the more than 150 other registered teams and 45 contest submissions in that it uses an optional respiratory monitor to signal to Naloxone carriers and the opioid user’s preselected circle of friends or support persons if the individual might be overdosing. The team received \$40,000 for winning the competition. — **Mary Dacuma**

USC Norris endorses updated HPV vaccine recommendations

THE USC NORRIS COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER has again united with each of the 69 National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated cancer centers in issuing a joint statement in support of recently revised recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. These guidelines recommend that children aged 11 to 12 should receive two doses of the HPV vaccine at least six months apart. Adolescents and young adults older than 15 should continue to complete the three-dose series. “The updated guidelines provide a safe and effective way for parents to protect their children from easily preventable cancers,” said Stephen Gruber, MD, PhD, MPH, professor of medicine and H. Leslie Hoffman and Elaine S. Hoffman Chair in Cancer Research at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and USC Norris director. “Our hope is that this will encourage more parents to vaccinate their children against HPV, which would dramatically decrease the incidence rates for cervical cancer, as well as other cancers that affect both men and women.” — **Mary Dacuma**



Stephen Gruber

Photos show power of phone

By Douglas Morino

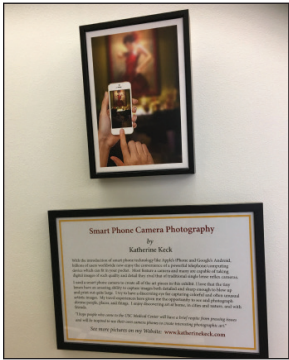
The skyscrapers of downtown Los Angeles reaching into the clouds on a rainy afternoon. A field of sunflowers standing under a blue summer sky. A sailboat floating on calm turquoise waters.

These are a few of the nearly two dozen images showcasing the power of a smartphone lens on display at the Keck Hospital of USC Cardinal Lobby.

The images were taken with an iPhone by photographer Katherine Keck in Los Angeles, San Francisco and other cities across the globe. Keck shares close ties with Keck Medicine of USC. Her son, Stephen M. Keck, is on the Board of Overseers of the Keck School of Medicine of USC. Her two other sons, William and Ted, are members of the W. M. Keck Foundation.

The iPhone Photo Project exhibit at Keck Hospital celebrates the capability of smartphones for capturing clear, detailed images, Keck said. The photographs show the versatility of a smartphone’s camera, she added.

“With the iPhone in particular, anyone can be a photog-



A new exhibit by Katherine Keck featuring smartphone photos is on display at the Keck Hospital of USC Cardinal Lobby.



Courtesy Katherine Keck

rapher,” she said. “It’s simply a matter of training the eye.”

Keck has traveled across the U.S., Europe, Africa and Asia with her smartphone and a traditional camera, immersing herself in different cultures and snapping photos to document her journeys.

Keck said she hopes the images in her new exhibit capture the attention, if only for a brief moment, of those who walk through the Cardinal Lobby.

“I am hopeful that patients and staff members can look at the photographs on the wall and will have some respite,” Keck said. “These photos can broaden their perspective and take their minds off pressing

problems and give them a sense of relief.”

Keck said she was drawn to photography because it provides an opportunity for constant learning and growth. Photography also has allowed her to explore new places in unexpected ways and become closer to people of different cultures.

“My camera has become my best friend in many ways,” Keck said. “You’re never alone when you have your camera.”

Keck said she plans on donating the images permanently to Keck Hospital. Her images also were on public display inside the Palace Hotel in Berlin and now are being displayed at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin.

Study uses social media to track hookah use

By Larissa Puro

Social media is giving researchers insight into the rising use of hookah, according to a study from the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

Hookah, smoked through a water pipe and also known as shisha, has harmful health effects similar to cigarettes. But as cigarette use declined between 2005 and 2015 in the United States, hookah use increased.

Investigators analyzed Instagram to capture and document the social and environmental context in which individuals use, and are marketed, hookah-related products.

“By focusing on social media data, we can quickly discover emerging problems posed to public health, directly observing what the public is experiencing, doing and thinking almost in real-time,” said postdoctoral fellow Jon-Patrick Allem, PhD, who led the study with research scientist Kar-Hai Chu, PhD.

The study, published Jan. 11 in *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, describes how the researchers analyzed posts on Instagram between Feb. 19 and May 19, 2016, by combining the hashtag #hookah with a geo-location inside the contiguous U.S.

Their analysis of more than 5,000 posts determined overarching themes within the images. More than a third were promotional material for hookah lounges, restaurants, bars and nightclubs, while a quarter depicted people lounging and using a hookah. Other themes included photos of a person blowing smoke or of stylized pipes.

Hookah promotion on social media was not surprising, said Jennifer Unger, PhD, professor of preventive medicine and co-author of the study. However, a third of the images showcased

or referenced alcohol, suggesting nightlife entertainment regularly depicts and promotes using multiple substances — “a clear justification for a public health response.”

“Instagram’s focus on images facilitates picture-based advertising where hookah lounges promote drink specials at the same time nightclubs promote hookah specials,” Chu said. “Our findings could be of great importance to public health as tobacco use facilitates greater intake of alcohol and vice versa.”



iStock

Hookah is smoked through a water pipe.

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