



Steve Cohn

## Marking a milestone

USC held graduation celebrations across the University Park and Health Sciences campuses on May 12-13. For complete coverage of the health sciences commencement ceremonies, see pages 3-4 or go to [snip.ly/8h5oh](http://snip.ly/8h5oh)



David Sprague

## Inaugural chair to support Alzheimer's disease research

By Douglas Morino

Berislav V. Zlokovic, MD, PhD, the pioneering researcher whose work has transformed modern understanding of degenerative neurological diseases, was installed as the inaugural holder of the Mary Hayley and Selim Zilkha Chair in Alzheimer's Disease Research at a ceremony held May 4 at the Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute.

Zlokovic, chair and professor of physiology and biophysics at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, also is the director of the institute.

The chair was established to support research efforts to understand Alzheimer's disease. The institute was established in 2003 through a gift from Zilkha, whose family has been affected by the disease.

"Selim Zilkha learned that Alzheimer's disease is one that affects the mind, as well as the heart," said USC President C. L. Max Nikias, PhD. "Mary Hayley and Selim Zilkha are two visionary philanthropists who have contributed to

advancing scientific discoveries through their extraordinary generosity."

Zlokovic's research focuses on the links between the health of blood vessels in the brain and degenerative brain diseases. His accomplishments have earned the researcher worldwide acclaim, Nikias added.

"Professor Zlokovic has ushered in a new age of innovation and discovery, leading the way with bold new breakthroughs," Nikias said. "For those suffering from neurological degenerative diseases, his work provides a ray of hope for their healing."

Last year, Zlokovic and his team were awarded four grants totaling \$25 million to expand research efforts.

Zlokovic received his bachelor's degree from Belgrade College of Sciences in what is now Serbia. For his medical degree and doctorate, he attended the University of Belgrade, where he also completed his residency in clinical physiology. He then

See **CHAIR**, page 2

## USC Choi Family Awards celebrate care, compassion

By Douglas Morino

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

The prestigious awards honor physicians, residents, nurses and staff who hold an unwavering commitment to compassionate patient care.

The 2017 winners were:

**Staff:** Jane Bateman, concierge at Keck Hospital

**Nurse:** Linda Dankwa, nurse on 7S ICU

**Physician:** Michael Wang, MD, associate professor of clinical medicine

**Resident/Fellow:** Adrian Dobrowolsky, MD, clinical instructor of surgery (fellow)

**Team:** USC Verdugo Hills Hospital Emergency Department

The awards are part of the USC Choi Family Excellence in Patient-Centered Care Endowment, which was established in 2016 by Keck Medicine of USC through a generous gift from the Choi family. The endowment provides funding for education and training focused

on compassion, empathy, advocacy and patient-centered care.

"This philanthropic partnership helps ensure the culture of service and patient advocacy that exists will be supported and enhanced now and into the future," said Rod Hanners, COO of Keck Medicine of USC and CEO of Keck Medical Center of USC.

Each awardee received \$2,000, along with an additional \$2,000 for their department to be used for programs, training and activities that support and foster a culture of excellence in patient-centered care.

Additionally, each recipient's name will appear on a "perpetual plaque" installed in a place of prominence at Keck Medical Center of USC.

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**"Their compassion, empathy and advocacy for our patients and families embody our commitment to beyond exceptional care."**

— Rod Hanners  
COO of Keck Medicine  
CEO of Keck Medical Center



Don Milici

Members of the USC Verdugo Hills Hospital emergency department smile after receiving the team award at the USC Choi Family Awards for Excellence in Patient-Centered Care.

## Biden discusses Moonshot Initiative, cancer research



Stuart Isett/Fortune Brainstorm Health

David Agus, left, and former Vice President Joe Biden are seen at the Fortune Brainstorm Health conference, held May 2 in San Diego.

By Autumn Beemer Phillips

David Agus, MD, professor of medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and director of the Lawrence J. Ellison Institute for Transformative Medicine of USC, interviewed former Vice President Joe Biden recently on the progress of the Cancer Moonshot Initiative and what to look for in the coming months.

The Keck School, Ellison Institute and the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center have been partners in the initiative and its vision to double the rate of progress in the understanding, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care of cancer.

The interview took place in front of health care leaders and industry professionals at the second

annual Fortune Brainstorm Health conference, held May 2 in San Diego. The former vice president discussed his new Biden Cancer Initiative, which he is founding to continue the work of the Cancer Moonshot.

During his 45-minute conversation with Agus, who also is on the board of the Biden Cancer Initiative, Biden emphasized the need for breaking down silos and increasing collaboration and cooperation.

He also addressed the need for data sharing to move research forward. The Cancer Moonshot was instrumental in getting 10 countries to agree to share their cancer data with the U.S. and the new initiative

See **BIDEN**, page 5



# USC Verdugo Hills Hospital expands surgery offerings

By Lex Davis

As part of its efforts to serve an even greater segment of the Southern California community, Keck Medicine of USC is expanding its surgical offerings at USC Verdugo Hills Hospital. Patients previously had been able to undergo surgery with Keck Medicine physicians at USC-VHH, but had to commute roughly 13 miles to Keck Medical Center for clinical visits and consultations. The added convenience of the new clinical location continues Keck Medicine’s mission of delivering patient-centered care.

The new space offers state-of-the-art technology to ensure that surgeons and staff can deliver the high-quality service.

“Exceptional care is about more than top-notch skills and cutting-edge technology,” explained Vaughn Starnes, MD, Distinguished Professor and chair of surgery, and H. Russell Smith Foundation Chair for Stem Cell and Cardiovascular Thoracic Research. “We’re pleased to be offering our patients in the

Verdugo Hills area a welcoming environment that’s close to home.”

Surgical options now available at USC-VHH include bariatrics, colorectal, upper GI and general (including breast cancer surgery), plastics and reconstruction, and vascular surgery and endovascular therapy.

- The plastics and reconstruction physicians will be coordinating with the general surgery team to create a satellite of Keck Medicine’s multidisciplinary Harold E. and Henrietta C. Lee Breast Center, allowing patients to work seamlessly with breast oncology surgeons and breast reconstruction surgeons. In addition, the plastics and reconstruction team will focus on wound healing and aesthetic surgeries.
- Each member of the colorectal team has been nationally recognized for expertise in minimally invasive treatments. The team performs 90 percent of surgeries laparoscopically, compared with

dramatically lower rates nationwide. The program is one of only a few in the nation that perform combined endo-laparoscopic surgery to remove difficult colon polyps and avoid colon restrictions.

- The bariatrics team members are available to consult on both surgical and non-surgical weight-management options. They also are highly skilled in bariatric revision surgeries, including revisions of failed lap band surgeries.
- The vascular surgery and endovascular therapy team offers the latest noninvasive diagnostic imaging technology and dedication to using minimally invasive treatments. The vascular team integrates with other divisions to provide individualized care and is committed to using advanced endovascular techniques to allow for smoother, shorter recoveries.

Physicians already have started seeing patients at the new space. Patients can call (818) 790-7100 to make an appointment.

## CHAIR: Grants totaled \$25 million in 2016

Continued from page 1

certified his medical degree in the U.S. and obtained a California medical license.

Prior to starting his medical career, he trained as an opera singer.

“While opera was his passion, the sciences were his dream,” said Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, dean of the Keck School and director of the USC Gayle and Edward Roski Eye Institute. “I am so glad he followed his dreams and devoted his career to obtaining a better understanding of Alzheimer’s and other neurodegenerative diseases. Over his career, Dr. Zlokovic has made significant contributions to the science of neurodegenerative diseases. I can’t imagine anyone more deserving of this honor.”

More than 5 million Americans currently live



Steve Cohn

From left, Berislav Zlokovic, Mary Hayley and Selim Zilkha are seen during the chair installation celebration.

with Alzheimer’s disease and it is the sixth-leading cause of death in the country, according to the Alzheimer’s Association.

Zlokovic called being established as the Mary Hayley and Selim Zilkha Chair in Alzheimer’s Disease Research an “incredible honor” and one of the great moments of his professional career. Zlokovic spent 11 years at the Keck School

before going to the University of Rochester Medical Center. He rejoined the Keck School in 2011.

“Brain science is the last medical frontier,” he said, before thanking his colleagues and research team for their support and commitment to ending degenerative brain diseases.

“I can say that one of my best decisions in life was when I came back to USC.”

## Calendar of Events

### Friday, May 19

**10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.** Amgen Tour of California and Keck Medicine of USC. “Stage 6 Finish Line Lifestyle Festival.” Big Bear Boulevard, Big Bear Lake. Info: [amgentourofcalifornia.com](http://amgentourofcalifornia.com)

### Saturday, May 20

**10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.** Amgen Tour of California and Keck Medicine of USC. “Stage 7 Finish Line Lifestyle Festival.” Pasadena Convention Center, Pasadena. Info: [amgentourofcalifornia.com](http://amgentourofcalifornia.com)

### Monday, May 22

**3 p.m.-5 p.m.** SC CTSI’s Workforce Development Seminar. “Career Development Seminar Session: HR Administration and Processes Pertaining to Research,” Carmen Carillo. Harkness Auditorium, CSC 250. Info: Karen Kim, (323) 442-8281, [wd@sc-ctsi.org](mailto:wd@sc-ctsi.org). RSVP: <http://bit.ly/2qUjIFD>

### Wednesday, May 24

**Noon.** Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute Seminar. “Wiring Up a Circuit to Perform Computations: Development of Direction Selectivity,” Marla B. Feller, PhD, University

of California, Berkeley. Herklotz Seminar Room, ZNI 112. Info: Emily Chu, (323) 442-3219, [Emily.Chu@med.usc.edu](mailto:Emily.Chu@med.usc.edu), <http://www.usc.edu/zni>

**Noon.** The Saban Research Institute. “Engineering Cells with Synthetic Biology Molecular Tools to Control Their Behavior for Basic Research and Regenerative Medicine Applications,” Leonardo Morsut, PhD. Saban Research Building Auditorium, 4661 Sunset Blvd. Info: Sandy Wang, (323) 361-7489, [tecpad@chla.usc.edu](mailto:tecpad@chla.usc.edu), <http://chla.org/tecpad>

**3 p.m.** USC Stevens Center for Innovation Seminar. “IP Landscape Analysis of CAR-T: Strategies for Success,” Antoinette F. Konski, JD, Foley & Lardner LLP. Eli and Edythe Broad CIRM Center Auditorium. Info: Peijean Tsai, (213) 821-6063, [pejeant@usc.edu](mailto:pejeant@usc.edu), <http://bit.ly/2qdSHaP>. RSVP: <http://www.usc.edu/esvp> Code: [stevens2017](http://www.usc.edu/esvp)

### Friday, May 26

**8:30 a.m.** Hastings Center for Pulmonary Research Seminar. “An Induced Pluripotent Stem Cell Model for Idiopathic Pulmonary

Fibrosis Sheds New Light on Disease Pathogenesis and Potential for Therapy,” Brigitte Gomperts, MD, UCLA. IRD 734. Info: Elva Rubio, (323) 409-7184, [elvarubi@usc.edu](mailto:elvarubi@usc.edu)

### Wednesday, May 31

**11 a.m.** USC/Amgen Seminar. “FGF21 as a potential therapy for diabetes/obesity,” Murielle Veniant-Ellison. Eli and Edythe Broad CIRM Center Auditorium. Info: Cristy Lytal, (323) 442-2172, <http://stemcell.usc.edu/events>

**6 p.m.-8 p.m.** USC Institute of Urology Seminar. “Life After Prostate Cancer Treatment,” Daniel Park, PA-C, MHA. Mayer Auditorium. Info: Alan Arredondo, (323) 865-0757, <http://bit.ly/2on9ZkX>

### Friday, June 2

**8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.** USC Department of Ophthalmology Symposium. “42 Years InSight.” The Huntington Library, Rothenberg Hall, San Marino. Info and RSVP: Mayra Ornelas, (323) 442-6780, [mayra.ornelas@med.usc.edu](mailto:mayra.ornelas@med.usc.edu), <http://eye.keckmedicine.org/summer-symposium/>

Now in its sixth year, the Roundtable remains one of the most highly anticipated events of the global medicine program.

“It’s a time of sharing experiences and learning from each other, and what it means to be a global citizen,” said Elahe Nezami, PhD, associate professor of clinical preventive medicine and medical education (educational scholar); associate dean for graduate affairs (undergraduate, masters and professional programs); director, health promotion and global health programs; and director, global medicine program at the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

Martin Shapiro, a Dhablania and Kim Family Global Medicine Fellow and third-year medical student at the Keck School, studied the effectiveness of using mobile apps to provide treatment to tuberculosis patients in Cambodia.

“This opportunity to work for an NGO (non-governmental organization), to work abroad, taking technology and leveraging existing resources and existing systems, can really change the outcomes and change the outreach that we are able to have,” Shapiro said.

**Noon.** Department of Medicine, Gehr Family Center of Implementation Science Talk. “The State of Health Care Reform in Los Angeles County,” Mark Ridley-Thomas, PhD, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor, Second District. Eli and Edythe Broad CIRM Center Auditorium. Info: Rachel Lim, (323) 409-3823, [rachel.lim@med.usc.edu](mailto:rachel.lim@med.usc.edu)

### Saturday, June 3

**7:45 a.m.-4 p.m.** USC Thyroid Diagnostic Center Continuing Medical Education. “The 39th Thyroid 2017: Practical Solutions to Complex Clinical Problems.” Mayer Auditorium. Info: Chelsea Michel, (323) 442-2555, [uscme@usc.edu](mailto:uscme@usc.edu), <https://cmetracker.net/KECKUSC/Catalog>

### Tuesday, June 6

**11 a.m.-4 p.m.** The Saban Research Institute of Children’s Hospital Los Angeles. “22nd Annual Poster Session,” Mark S. Humayun, MD, PhD. Saban Research Building Auditorium, 4661 Sunset Blvd. Info: Sandy Wang, (323) 361-7489, [tecpad@chla.usc.edu](mailto:tecpad@chla.usc.edu), <http://chla.org/tecpad>

**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](http://hscnews.usc.edu/calendar-of-events). Submit items at [tinyurl.com/calendar-hsc](http://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.





Photos by Steve Cohn

New doctors from the Keck School of Medicine of USC celebrate with Dean Rohit Varma, bottom right, during the commencement ceremony. **For more stories and photos, go to [snip.ly/8h5oh](https://snip.ly/8h5oh)**

# Congratulations ring out for newest class of graduates

By Health Sciences staff

Proud and jubilant graduates and their friends and families celebrated across the University Park and Health Sciences campuses on May 12 and 13 as USC held its 134th commencement. The Keck School of Medicine of USC, Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC and the USC School of Pharmacy held eight satellite ceremonies to honor the hundreds of graduates.

## Health Promotion and Global Health

On May 12, 106 new graduates of the Keck School of Medicine of USC celebrated with family, friends and fellow graduates in Town and Gown

at USC's University Park campus.

Having earned bachelor's degrees in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention or Global Health, the graduates were jubilant as Program Director Elahe Nezami, PhD, associate dean for graduate affairs (undergraduate, masters and professional programs), encouraged them to enjoy congratulations the entire day, as they had earned such praise. Rohit Varma, MD, MPH, dean of the Keck School and director of the USC Gayle and Edward Roski Eye Institute, was among the school's leadership at the celebration.

The ceremony also highlighted the 20th anniversary of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Studies at the Keck School, and Nezami expressed her gratification at seeing the program continue to shape future leaders in health care.

Commencement speaker Peter V. Long, PhD, president and CEO of Blue Shield of California Foundation, implored graduates to always serve others, no matter where their educational or career paths may lead.

## Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

"The most important piece of advice I can give you today is make sure everyone calls you doctor! You've earned the right; you've put in the hard work; you can legally prescribe medicine; and you are now graduates of the best dental school in the history of the world," said Varun Soni, PhD, JD, dean of the USC Office of Religious Life, joking that, despite his holding a doctorate degree, his family insists he's not a "real doctor."

Soni delivered the address at Ostrow's 117th commencement ceremony — an out-of-the-box choice for a dental school, acknowledged Avishai Sadan, DMD, Ostrow's dean.

"It's his message of mutual respect and inclusivity that inspired me to invite him to deliver the keynote today," Sadan said. "We are a diverse school representing a wide variety of religions, cultures and ethnicities. The halls of the dental school reflect our global population and the idealism that we can work together and succeed."

In total, Ostrow conferred 177 doctor of dental surgery degrees, 33 bachelor's of dental hygiene degrees, 52 advanced certificates, 19 master's degrees and two doctor of philosophy degrees.

## MD/PhD and MD

Friends and family of the 132nd class to graduate as doctors of medicine from the Keck School gathered May 13 at the Galen Center on the University Park Campus to offer their congratulations and cheer on their loved ones.

After greeting and congratulating the class, Keck School Dean Rohit

Varma opened his remarks with a quote from "The Summer Day," by poet Mary Oliver.

"Tell me, what is it you plan to do, with your one wild and precious life?" he asked the assembled class. "We look forward to how you will contribute to the practice of medicine, to curing disease, to educating the next generation of physicians who will now follow you, and to improving the health and well-being of people around the world. I know that this is a tall order, but I also know that you are prepared for this journey."

Leonard Schaeffer, Judge Robert Maclay Widney Chair at USC and founding chairman and CEO of WellPoint, offered the commencement address, and Grand Marshal Henri Ford, MD, MHA, professor of surgery and vice dean for professional education, led the graduates in the Hippocratic Oath.

## PhD, Master of Science and Master of Public Health

An excited crowd of family and friends gathered May 13 at the Galen Center to celebrate the commencement of nearly 400 PhD and master's degree candidates from the Keck School.

The ceremony began with a speech by Grand Marshal Donna Spruijt-Metz, MFA, PhD, director of the USC mHealth Collaboratory Center for Economic and Social Research, research professor of psychology at the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, who is well known to many students in her important role as director of responsible conduct in research at the Keck School.

The commencement speech was delivered by Anne Schuchat, MD, acting director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and acting administrator for the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. Schuchat inspired students by reminding them how many lives can be saved through science, and emphasized that it is crucially important to implement inventions once they are made.

"Science does not end with



**ABOVE:** Graduates in the health promotion and global health programs smile during the commencement ceremony.

**BELOW:** Varun Soni, dean of the USC Office of Religious Life, delivers the commencement speech for the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC.



Photos by GradImages





Claire Norman



Gradimages

**ABOVE LEFT:** Emily Schulze celebrates with her Doctor of Occupational Therapy classmates during the university's main commencement ceremony. **TOP RIGHT:** Physician Assistant Program Director Kevin Lohenry and commencement speaker Ruth Ballweg smile before the PA program ceremony. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Michael Nyeholt, Cheryl Resnik and Mark Todd are seen before the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy commencement ceremony.



Amanda Busick

PhD graduates Derek Dangerfield and Kathy Wojcik strike a pose for friends at the reception for the Keck School's PhD and master's commencement ceremony.

## COMMENCEMENT

Continued from page 3

discovery," she told the audience. "We must follow through with delivery."

Diplomas were awarded by Keck School Dean Rohit Varma and Associate Dean for Graduate Affairs Elahe Nezami.

### Primary Care Physician Assistant

On May 12, the Keck School's Primary Care Physician Assistant Program held a satellite commencement ceremony on the southwest lawn of the Allan Hancock Foundation Building on the University Park Campus for its 58 graduates.

PA program faculty member Mitzi D'Aquila, MACM, PA-C, instructor of clinical family medicine, opened the ceremony by noting the achievements of the Class of 2017, particularly those students who participated in the Interprofessional Geriatric Curriculum, students to be inducted into Pi Alpha Honor Society — the national honor society for PAs — and those who were active in leadership during their time at USC.

Keynote speaker Ruth Ballweg, MPA, PA-C Emeritus, well known for her professional leadership, spoke on the history of PAs and offered advice for the future.

"The best things in our lives often emerge from our willingness to be open," she advised. "And if there is a profession that is truer to this than any other, it is the PA profession."

Program director Kevin Lohenry, PhD, PA-C, assistant professor of clinical family medicine, closed the ceremony with an analogy to climbing Mount Everest, noting that it takes a team to achieve success and that even through challenges, the Class of 2017 worked hard and accomplished greatness together.

### USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy

Amy Lamb OTD, OT/L, delivered the keynote address during the USC Mrs. T.H. Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy's 75th annual commencement ceremony on May 12 at Leavey Library West.

Lamb is the president of the American Occupational Therapy Association and an expert on health care policy and reform and occupational therapy for chronic disease prevention and improving wellness. In her address, Lamb encouraged the new graduates to embrace discomfort, which she believes is often a sign that beneficial personal and professional growth is underway.

The class of 2017 consisted of 10 bachelor of science, 167 master of arts, 67 doctorate of occupational therapy and two doctor of philosophy graduates.

The ceremony was led by Grace Baranek, PhD, associate dean and chair of the USC Chan Division. It marked her first USC commencement since being appointed the division's administrative leader earlier this year.

### USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy

"One of the tenets of the oath you take today is 'to exercise all aspects of my calling with dignity and honor,'" said Michael Nyeholt during his address at the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy's commencement ceremony, held May 12 at Bovard Auditorium on the University Park Campus. "Your challenge will be to address each patient with dignity and honor when they bring you their physical pain, their uncertainty, their determination, their willingness, their frailty, their reality and their hope."

Nyeholt is no stranger to physical therapy, having experienced a paralyzing motorcycle accident at the age of 24

that led to his working with physical therapists to regain movement in his arms and legs.

It was his experience that led the one-time competitive swimmer (once ranked ninth in the U.S. and 13th in the world) and his friend, USC Senior Associate Athletic Director Ron Orr, to develop Swim with Mike, an annual swim-a-thon that provides scholarships to physically challenged athletes.

In total, the division conferred 92 doctor of physical therapy degrees as well as five master of science degrees and six doctor of philosophy degrees in biokinesiology.

### USC School of Pharmacy

The USC School of Pharmacy marked its 110th commencement on May 12 at the Health Sciences Campus before an audience of more than 1,500 family, friends, faculty and staff.

Dean Vassilios Papadopoulos, DPharm, PhD, presided over the event at Pappas Quad, advised the new pharmacists, pharmacologists, pharmaceutical scientists, health economists and regulatory experts that they are entering the health

care continuum at an auspicious but uncertain time.

"You are now the drivers of change and innovation that has the potential to save lives and improve human condition," he said.

Commencement speaker Jessica Núñez de Ybarra, MD, MPH, of the California Department of Public Health and co-author of the California Wellness Plan, the state's chronic disease prevention and health promotion plan, reminded the graduates that "many of the solutions to our health problems will come from outside of a medicine bottle and require the collaboration of many people."

Amanda Vu, president of the PharmD class, and Zoe Folchman-Wagner, representing master's and PhD graduates from departments across the school, offered the student addresses.

Folchman-Wagner advised the newly minted graduates retain the sense of wonder they had as children and remember why they decided to embark on this academic journey.

"With these degrees, we have the power to make a real and lasting difference," she said.



**ABOVE:** Commencement speaker Jessica Núñez de Ybarra of the California Department of Public Health addresses the graduates and guests at the USC School of Pharmacy ceremony. **BELOW:** Graduates enter the School of Pharmacy ceremony on the Health Sciences Campus.



Photos by Reynaldo Obrero



# Keck Medicine recognized for equality in patient care

By L. Alexis Young

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation Healthcare Equality Index recently named Keck Medicine of USC as a “Top Performer in LGBTQ Healthcare Equality.” The index recognizes health care organizations that provide equitable and inclusive care of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) patients, visitors and employees.

The Healthcare Equality Index is intended as a tool to give health care facilities the information and resources needed to ensure that LGBTQ people have access to nondiscriminatory patient-centered care. The report is used to applaud facilities that have

shown their commitment to LGBTQ patient-centered care, with scores based on the services and programs offered to the LGBTQ community. The “Top Performer” designation is given to facilities that score between 80 to 95 points on the survey. Keck Hospital of USC, USC Norris Cancer Hospital and USC Verdugo Hills Hospital all received the designation.

“Keck Medicine of USC has a great opportunity to position itself to be a leader in health care for LGBTQ patients,” said Felipe Osorno, executive administrator of performance management at Keck Medicine of USC. “It’s a priority for our health system to provide an environment of respect

where everyone feels welcomed. We want to equip our staff with the skills and knowledge to provide exceptional care to our LGBTQ patients, and provide an inclusive environment for our LGBTQ employees.”

Keck Medicine has worked to update its nondiscrimination, visitation and hiring policies, and patient handbook, and offered online LGBTQ training modules for employees. The medical center also has created Keck PRIDE, a task force that designs and implements strategies to foster a welcoming environment for patients and families and create a space for LGBTQ employees to discuss and advance key issues.

Lindsey Lawrence, a performance improvement analyst at Keck Medicine, said the organization is looking into additional educational and outreach opportunities to provide even better patient-centered care to LGBTQ patients and their families.

“We are really looking top to bottom at what we’re doing now and what more we can do,” she said. “We’re creating an atmosphere where our LGBTQ patients and their families can comfortably share who they are with their providers and where our LGBTQ staff feel valued.”

The 2017 Healthcare Equality Index report can be viewed at <http://www.hrc.org/hej/about-the-hei>.

## Exhibit shows artist plus researcher equals infinite inspiration

By Cristy Lytal

What happens when you pair 14 local artists with 14 biomedical researchers? The answer is currently on display at the Hoyt Gallery on the Health Sciences Campus of the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

The exhibition “Artist & Researcher” showcases the results of these creative collaborations, which aim to depict the conceptual language of science and the human impact of research, through the interpretive lens of art.

Barbara Kolo’s abstract representation of the kidney hangs beside one of the images from the laboratory of Andy McMahon, PhD, W.M. Keck Provost Professor of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine and Biological Sciences; Chair of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine; and director, Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research at USC, that inspired the work.

Andrea Bogdan’s vivid series of colorful glass panels depicts a special type of cartilage cell that plays a vital role in repairing bone injuries, according to recent research from the laboratory of Francesca Mariani,



Artist Shula Singer Arbel talks about the piece she created based on the research of Marilena Melas, who studies renal cancer.

PhD, assistant professor of cell and neurobiology.

Cybele Rowe’s smooth white sculpture, titled “Tau,” evokes proteins that can malfunction in the brain, along with less tangible aspects of Alzheimer’s disease, studied by the laboratory

of Tiffany Chow, MD, professor of clinical neurology. Other works focus on research about diseases ranging from melanoma to multiple sclerosis.

“There may be some ways that artists can capture what we’re doing that we, as scientists, are not able to explain to the

public,” said Amy Firth, PhD, assistant professor of medicine, who was paired with artist Zeina Baltagi.

“Artist & Researcher” is the latest in a series of exhibitions curated by the Keck School’s first artist-in-residence, Ted Meyer.

“Thanks to the vision and generosity of our Dean Rohit Varma, Ted’s work has helped us reimagine Hoyt Gallery’s mission as a venue to foster cross-disciplinary collaboration, and understanding between patients and future doctors,” said Pamela Schaff, MD, associate professor of clinical family medicine (educational scholar) and director of the Humanities, Ethics/Economics, Art, and Law (HEAL) Program.

At the opening reception, Meyer shared his deeply personal connection to the transformative impact of medical research.

“I am alive because of the research done at the National Institutes of Health,” he said. “I (first) went to NIH when I was 5 ... for a treatment that didn’t happen until I was 42. So I know you researchers are in it for the long haul, and I think you guys are fantastic. So thank you all.”

## AWARDS: Winners’ commitment, dedication lauded

Continued from page 1

The Choi Family Awards are open each year to all health care professionals at Keck Medicine of USC.

“This year’s winners embody the Choi Family Excellence in Patient Centered Care,” Hanners said. “Their compassion, empathy and advocacy for our patients and families embody our commitment to beyond exceptional care. We are deeply grateful for their dedication to our patients and Keck Medicine of USC.”

Keck Medical Center of USC also hosted

the USC Choi Family Endowment: Beyond the Diagnosis — Transforming Care from Patient to Person, a symposium featuring guest speakers and public health experts from across Keck Medicine, as well as Press Ganey Chief Strategy Officer Nell Buhlman, who spoke about the importance of engaged caregivers and the patient experience.

The Choi family chose to support the Keck Medicine of USC Patient Experience Department after a family member received exceptional care from Keck Hospital of USC physicians, nurses and staff.



Former Vice President Joe Biden talks with David Agus about the future of cancer research during the Fortune Brainstorm Health conference.

## BIDEN

Continued from page 1

will now help obtain that data and find ways to aggregate it, Biden said.

Additionally, they discussed the overwhelming cost of cancer drugs in the United States. The Biden Cancer Initiative is looking at alternate ways to drive down costs, from federal funding for drug development to intellectual property deals between drug companies to get them to work together for the good of everyone.

“When you have a drug that’s been out on the market ... that was 15 years ago at \$25,000 bucks per year, and now is \$180,000 per year, there’s no justification for that,” Biden said.

They also covered the importance of governmental funding for scientific advancement. Biden proudly pointed out that the last spending bill increased spending for the National Institutes of Health.

“I think our Republican colleagues have decided that there are certain things that are just not negotiable,” he said of the NIH funding. Biden added that he felt this type of support not only is good for research now but also will be key to inspiring future generations of scientists.

Biden also reimagined how the government, academia, nonprofits and the private sector can better organize their resources and systems to collaborate to take on cancer.



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Keck Medicine of USC

BEYOND EXCEPTIONAL MEDICINE™



## 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:



Frederick Albania  
Ofelia Amon  
Josefina Anig  
Rafael Baez  
Carl Bicara  
Eddie Candelas  
Rodolfo Cuellar  
Marie Fontelera  
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Emma Lacanilao  
Courtney Lambert  
Sharon Lee  
Carol Madrigal  
Ruth Magana  
Robynne Mannino  
Rafael Martinez  
Alan McDaniel

Douglas Morino

Rod Hanners stands with Brenda Leal during the Years of Service Breakfast. Leal has been with the organization for 40 years.

## Hospital Week honors longtime employees, dedicated staff

USC EMPLOYEES WERE HONORED IN MAY FOR their service to Keck Medicine of USC at the annual Years of Service Breakfast, part of Hospital Week celebrations. More than 449 staff members who achieved a milestone of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 or 40 years gathered at the breakfast, held in the Soto I courtyard on the Health Sciences Campus. “The foundation of our success is built upon you, our employees, and your commitment to our mission,” said Rod Hanners, COO of Keck Medicine of USC and CEO of Keck Medical Center of USC. “These milestones symbolize your commitment and we honor you for the role you play in maintaining our performance standards and commitment to excellence.” Among those honored at the breakfast was Brenda Leal, RN, who celebrated 40 years with the organization. — **Douglas Morino**



Ricardo Carrasco III

Susan Zweizig presents the keynote address during the 31st annual Scientific Forum and Research Symposium.

## Researchers discuss issues in obstetrics, gynecology

ON APRIL 21, CURRENT AND FORMER residents and fellows of the Keck School of Medicine of USC, the Keck Medicine Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and the Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center came together for the 31st annual Scientific Forum and Research Symposium, which featured presentations by both researchers and residents on some of the most pressing issues facing medical practitioners and patients in the field of obstetrics and gynecology. The keynote address, presented by Susan Zweizig, MD, professor and director of the division of gynecologic oncology and the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Massachusetts School of Medicine, was titled, “Promoting and Preserving Careers in Women’s Health through Wellness: A Shared Responsibility.” — **Leigh Bailey**

## Study: Number of uninsured in Los Angeles sees dramatic drop

THE PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS AND CHILDREN without health insurance declined dramatically in Los Angeles between 2011 and 2015, according to a new report from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, compiled with assistance from USC. The sharp decline — from 28.5 percent to 11.7 percent — spanned racial, ethnic, age, gender and geographic groups of adults 18 to 64 years old throughout the county. The news was even better for children: The percentage of uninsured dropped to 3.4 in 2015 — a clear improvement from 10.1 percent in 2002. “It’s not perfect, but the ACA has gotten us closer to a more equitable health care system,” said Michael Cousineau, DPH, professor of clinical preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and a contributor to the report. — **Larissa Puro**



Michael Cousineau

# Nurses, staff honored across hospitals

By Douglas Morino

Celebrations rang out in May across Keck Medical Center of USC in honor of nurses and staff members.

Among the celebrations during Nurses Week and Hospital Week was the annual nursing awards ceremony, held in Hoffman Café at Keck Hospital of USC.

“Our nurses are committed to excellence and providing our patients with care in a safe environment,” said Rod Hanners, COO, Keck Medicine of USC and CEO of Keck Medical Center of USC. “We are grateful for their talent, knowledge, compassion, professionalism and, above all else, dedication to our patients who entrust us with their care.”

National Nurses Week is celebrated annually by health care organizations across the United States to honor the work of nurses.

Employees also celebrated Hospital Week, which is held each year to honor the work of staff members who support patient care and health care facilities. Events at Keck Medical Center included food trucks, ice cream socials and raffles with prize giveaways.



Ricardo Carrasco III

Winners of the Nursing Awards are seen with Rod Hanners, center, during the awards ceremony, held May 10 at Keck Hospital of USC.

## Winners of the Keck Medical Center of USC annual Nurses Awards 2017

Nurse of the Year: <b>Paul Kangethe</b>	Advanced Practice Nurse of the Year: <b>Kimberly Sanchez</b>
Care Partner of the Year: <b>Chikara Nitao</b>	Nurse Leader of the Year: <b>Melanie Cariker</b>
Nurse Advocate of the Year: <b>Christina Garcia</b>	Nurse Humanitarian of the Year: <b>Emily Rorden</b>
Nurse Rookie of the Year: <b>Ariel Padilla</b>	
Nurse Preceptor of the Year: <b>Rosie Santiago</b>	

# Physicians blaze trail as part of study of new liver transplant technology

Keck Medicine of USC is the first medical center in the western United States to perform a liver transplant as part of a U.S. Food and Drug Administration investigational device exemption study testing the safety and effectiveness of a new method for preserving human livers prior to organ transplantation.

The device, which is limited by federal law to investigational use, maintains the donor liver at body temperature while cycling blood and nutrients through it — a significant departure from the standard practice of preserving donor organs on ice prior to transplant.

The transplant procedure, led by Yuri Genyk, MD, professor of clinical surgery at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and surgical director of the abdominal organ transplant program, and Linda Sher, MD, professor of clinical surgery at the Keck School and division chief of clinical research, was part of an ongoing multicenter randomized controlled trial involving Keck Medicine and 14 other institutions across the country.

The investigational device is designed to create an environment similar to that in the human body by maintaining flow of oxygenated blood at a normal temperature and maintaining pressures and flow rates between organ recovery and transplantation. This gives surgeons time to observe how well a donor liver is functioning over several hours, which could help them identify and exclude non-viable organs before transplantation.

“With so many patients on the waiting list for organs, any technology that can potentially

increase the donor pool is, quite literally, life-changing,” Genyk said.

Liver transplant is the second most common organ transplant. More than 6,000 liver transplants are performed annually in the United States and more than 1,500 people die each year waiting for a donated liver to become available, according to the American Liver Foundation.

“We are hopeful that this device may prove useful in increasing the number of organs that are available for transplant by ultimately allowing longer preservation times, providing a setting for monitoring the function of marginal livers and providing an environment to study interventions to improve graft function,” Sher said.

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