

THE POST

02•06



10
East
meets
West

UF Health Science
CENTER
Celebrating 50 Years

Radio
Active (5)

Time
Capsule (6)

Science &
Spirituality (19)

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ON THE COVER: All eyes are on China. The colleges of Pharmacy, Nursing and Public Health and Health Professions are seizing the moment to establish educational and research ties. Cover Illustration by Josh Clark.

Nursing conference on quality health care

A recent conference hosted by the University of Florida College of Nursing addressed a growing concern for many Americans: the quality of health care. The conference also kicked off the College's 50th anniversary.

"Quality: the Critical Variable in Health Care, The Dorothy M. Smith Nursing Leadership Conference" took place Jan. 19-20, with national experts and leaders in nursing and health-care administration discussing issues affecting quality in patient care, including the nursing shortage and quality patient outcomes. The conference's keynote speaker was Linda H. Aiken, Ph.D., R.N., a UF College of Nursing alumna and director of the Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Research at the University of Pennsylvania. Aiken spoke on saving lives through investments in nursing and looked at the history of patient safety and quality in health care.

"Quality has long been a cornerstone of professional nursing. The origins of contemporary quality can be traced to Florence Nightingale's research describing variation in outcomes for hospitalized patients in Crimea," Aiken said. "While quality has become a mantra in health care, there is less understanding of the important role of nurses in producing high quality care."

Aiken highlighted the problems in patient safety that exist in modern hospitals and how nurse workloads and environments, burnout and inexperience contribute to latent errors. However, she warned against trying to fill only the number of available hands and noted that as the education level of the nursing staff increases, patient mortality goes down.

"We could improve the level of poor outcomes in our hospital if we could move to a more educated work force," Aiken said. "This coupled with improving nurse practice environments and staffing ratios could save hospitals tens of thousands of lives annually."

Senior Vice President Doug Barrett and Dean Kathleen Ann Long officially kicked off the College of Nursing's 50th anniversary with a special ceremony where the commemorative anniversary banner was celebrated and the college's heritage was remembered. For more information on the college's 50th anniversary, visit www.nursing.ufl.edu/50.

— Tracy Brown Wright



Faculty, staff, alumni and distinguished guests celebrated during the Dorothy M. Smith Nursing Leadership Conference, when the College of Nursing commemorative banner was unfurled.

MELVIN FRIED

Melvin Fried, Ph.D., a University of Florida professor emeritus of biochemistry and molecular biology and one of the College of Medicine's first faculty members, died in his Gainesville home Jan. 16.

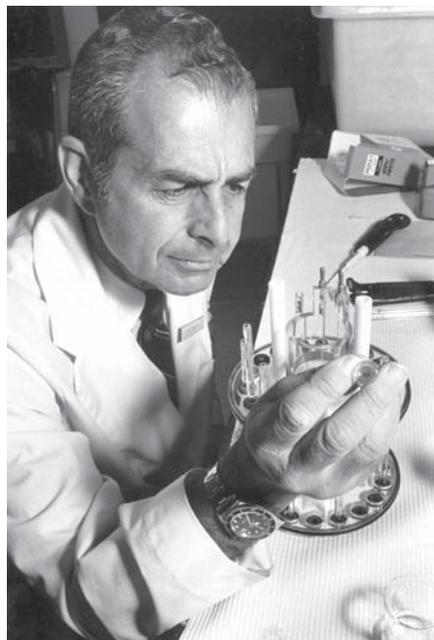
He was 81.

Fried came to UF as an assistant professor of biochemistry when the fledgling College of Medicine opened in 1956. He was one of the youngest faculty members who joined the new college.

After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, Fried, a UF alumnus, earned his doctorate in biochemistry at Yale University. He studied with two Nobel Prize-winning scientists at Cambridge University and the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis before he was recruited to UF.

Before retiring in 1993, Fried rose through the ranks to chair the biochemistry department and serve as an associate dean in the College of Medicine.

As a researcher, Fried received numerous grants and recognition for his studies of metabolism and lipoproteins. Fried and another researcher were the first to suggest how high-density lipoproteins, or "good" cholesterol, prevent clogged arteries.



CANCER PLAYS FOR A LAUGH



Comedian Tom Green may have been the first to approach testicular cancer from a humorous perspective when he recorded his surgery for an MTV documentary.

Now, with teasers such as, "One man, one ball, one hour," and "You'll laugh...you'll cry... you'll want to perform a self-exam," playwright Brian Lobel brings his solo act "Ball: a Traumedy" to the University of Florida. The performance, about illness, struggle and survival, starts at 7:30 p.m., March 2 in the Medical Sciences Building Auditorium.

In his performance, Lobel takes an irreverent, honest look at the serious, painful and sometimes demeaning aspects of fighting a battle against testicular cancer, and in doing so presents a story of real healing.

Brought by The Chapman Society and the College of Medicine, the program is free and open to UF Health Science Center and Shands staff, patients, students and faculty and to the general public. It is sponsored in part by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation.

Donations to the American Cancer Society Winn-Dixie Hope Lodge of Gainesville will be accepted at the door.

DONATIONS NEEDED

Still looking for a way to help victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans? Here's your chance: A group of UF medical students is traveling to New Orleans during spring break in mid-March to help victims still living in the hurricane-ravaged city. They need money and other donations to help. Send checks to the University of Florida Foundation (memo: Project FRIEND), P.O. Box 100689, Gainesville, FL 32610. For more information contact Nicole Sammons at nsammons@ufl.edu.



PARKING POLICY CHANGE FOR HEALTH CENTER GARAGES

Students, faculty and staff are no longer permitted to park in the pay visitor and patient areas of any Health Science Center garage on weekdays from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

This change is necessary to accommodate the increased demand for patient and visitor parking for the Health Science Center and Shands at UF, according to officials.

Violators of this policy will be ticketed or towed.

Transportation and Parking Services thanked the HSC community for its cooperation as it works to provide patients and visitors with convenient parking accommodations.

Please contact at 392-8048 if you have any questions.

CANDID



Pat Jones, secretary for Dr. James Flanagan, chairman of the department of biochemistry and molecular biology, has worked for the department for over 26 years.

COM's new number-crunching capabilities support research

By Tom Fortner

There's a slogan for a car company that goes "This is not your father's Oldsmobile." In the same way, a newly formed data center and biostatistics consulting service, based in the College of Medicine, is expected to turn the heads of some Health Science Center investigators who increasingly rely on computational tools and techniques in their research.

During the past several months, the college has aggressively invested in the growth of these high-end data support capabilities housed in its department of epidemiology and health policy research.

The services available to HSC clinicians and other investigators include a research and biostatistics consulting lab and a center for data coordination.

In the research and biostatistics consulting lab, departmental faculty members provide guidance on research design and measurement, statistical analysis and methodological and statistical review of manuscripts. These fee-based services are tailored to meet the needs of clinicians and other investigators who need limited consultative support.

The research data coordinating center works with researchers to help effectively plan for the capture, management and analysis of high-quality data and to provide high-speed, Web-based data hosting services designed for easy access by investigators and their staffs. Also fee-based, these comprehensive services meet all industry standards.

Department Chair Elizabeth Shenkman, Ph.D., who has taken the lead in building the programs, said having these types of sophisticated analytical services available to support the research of faculty in a top-tier academic health center these days is crucial.

"The quantitative requirements of research projects today are such that you simply must have this level of professional biostatistical and data management expertise as well the network capabilities to handle large amounts of information," said Shenkman. "The investment required in this expertise and in the computing infrastructure means that these programs are best organized as core services."

While the consultative, data management and hosting services are offered for a fee intended to cover costs, Shenkman emphasizes that her faculty – biostatisticians, epidemiologists, health-care economists and health outcomes researchers – are eager to collaborate on research projects. For that reason, they don't charge for participating in the development of grant proposals or pilot studies.

"We're faculty and we want to collaborate with other faculty," she said.



PHOTO BY SARAH KEWEL

Chris Barnes (left), network administrator, and Deepa Ranka, database administrator, lead the technical team supporting the department of health policy research's new Research Data Coordinating Center.

Although Shenkman's department has always had strong computing and analytical capabilities, College of Medicine Dean C. Craig Tisher, M.D., last year decided to create a bona fide biostatistics consulting service and data center under her leadership. The incremental investment was sizable, adding four staff members in data management and network administration, for a total of 10, and four biostatistics faculty members, including a divisional director. In addition, the department spent more than a half-million dollars on new equipment and infrastructure upgrades, including enhanced broadband connections.

The ultimate aim, Shenkman said, is to provide support with a customer service mentality and tailored to meet the needs of clinician researchers and any other health science investigators, whether their needs are large or small. Making the whole process transparent and educational will be key.

"It won't be us taking people's data into a black box and then they never see it again," said Shenkman. "We're really trying to approach this through the eyes of the clinical investigator and say, 'What do they need to make it as user-friendly for them as possible?'"

One often overlooked benefit of organizing services in this way is that it assures concordance with all industry standards, best practices and data integrity requirements of sponsors of clinical trials and other research. The department also undergoes an annual external audit to ensure its procedures are state-of-the-art. Including those kinds of assurances in a grant proposal can be value-added, said Shenkman.

"I think the more investigators can demonstrate that they have that level of expertise behind them," said Shenkman, "the stronger their proposal is going to be." **P**

To learn more about these services, visit www.ehpr.ufl.edu/research_services.asp

To schedule an appointment, call Cherrie Haddock at **265-0111, ext. 86331**

Are you **radio active?**

UF's amateur radio club looks to build membership from ranks of HSC health professionals

By Lindy McCollum-Brounley

As Gulf Coast residents from Naples to Galveston know, hurricane winds can render modern communications technologies into silent artifacts of a destroyed landscape. Hurricanes lash power and communications infrastructures until they fail, and they are often down for days, weeks, sometimes even months before service can be restored.

During these times of disaster, a little-known group of self-sufficient, amateur (ham) radio operators have helped bridge the communications gap, networking with police, aid organizations and each other to speed rescue and relief efforts. Their knowledge, technical skills and personal ham radio equipment can quickly open communications in disaster areas, sending and receiving voice and electronic information — such as e-mails, photographs and Morse code — over ham radio airwaves.

“We have not just one mode of communication, but many,” said Jay Garlitz, a 1982 graduate of the College of Dentistry. Garlitz serves as the faculty adviser for the Gator Amateur Radio Club and trustee of W4DFU, UF’s amateur radio station, which has been in continuous operation since it was founded in 1934.

Ham operators can talk around the world using “radio-skip,” where the radio signal is bounced off the atmosphere to another location on the globe using ham-designated satellites placed in orbit by U.S. and Russian spacecraft. They can even use Internet Protocol as an interface, the same technology used to place phone calls over the Internet, but completely wireless.

The country’s more than 730,000 amateur radio operators bring technical skills and a willingness to think outside the box that enables them to mobilize communications in a pinch. It is this technological versatility that makes ham operators so valuable during times of crisis.

At UF, the Gator Amateur Radio Club office is located on the 11th floor of the Health Science Center’s Dental Sciences Building, and many of W4DFU’s antennas and weather sensors are mounted on the roof of the College of Dentistry. Others are mounted to the roof of Beaty Towers. The club, which is funded through Student Government, even owns a crank-up, portable tower on a trailer.

Club membership currently includes about 20 licensed undergraduate students and about 30 licensed faculty and staff. Amateur radio operators must be licensed



PHOTO BY LINDY MCCOLLUM-BROUNLEY

Jay Garlitz, D.M.D., the Gator Amateur Radio Club faculty adviser and FCC trustee for the W4DFU station, stands on the roof of the Dental Sciences Building.

“Amateur radio is a versatile hobby, and one that dentists, physicians and other health professionals should take well to. It involves technical aspects and working with people, both of which health professionals do very well.”

— Jay Garlitz

through the Federal Communications Commission. In its 72 years of existence, the club has been recognized with several national awards and has communicated with operators in more than 200 countries.

W4DFU is a backup emergency communications station for the Alachua County Office of Emergency Management. It plays a wider role through accessing a

nationwide and Caribbean hurricane network; operators tune-in to monitor designated frequencies during hurricane emergencies, sending and receiving reports to and from each other, the state’s emergency management office, the National Hurricane Center and other public service organizations.

“The club represents UF every day and has always been dedicated to service,” Garlitz said. “We helped during recent hurricanes and it’s important to be prepared to serve during emergency situations, particularly since we are located within a major medical complex.”

“CQ CQ CQ CQ CQ” is the invitation ham operators broadcast when seeking conversations with others. Garlitz is sending his own “CQ” to Health Science Center physicians, dentists, nurses and other health professionals, inviting them to join the Gator Amateur Radio Club in helping Florida’s residents during times of emergency. He is a member of the Medical Amateur Radio Council, and said other health professionals would benefit from participating.

“The purpose of the MARCO network is to promote fellowship among amateur radio operators who are professionals in the healing arts,” Garlitz said. “But it’s also a weekly on-the-air network established for the purpose of exchanging medical and technical information that can be of public service during medical emergencies.... If you speak on a regular basis, then you know each other and are prepared during an emergency to help each other.

“Amateur radio is a versatile hobby, and one that dentists, physicians and other health professionals should take well to,” Garlitz said. “It involves technical aspects and working with people, both of which health professionals do very well.”

For more information about the Gator Amateur Radio Club, e-mail jgarlitz@ufl.edu or visit <http://www.gatorradio.org>. 

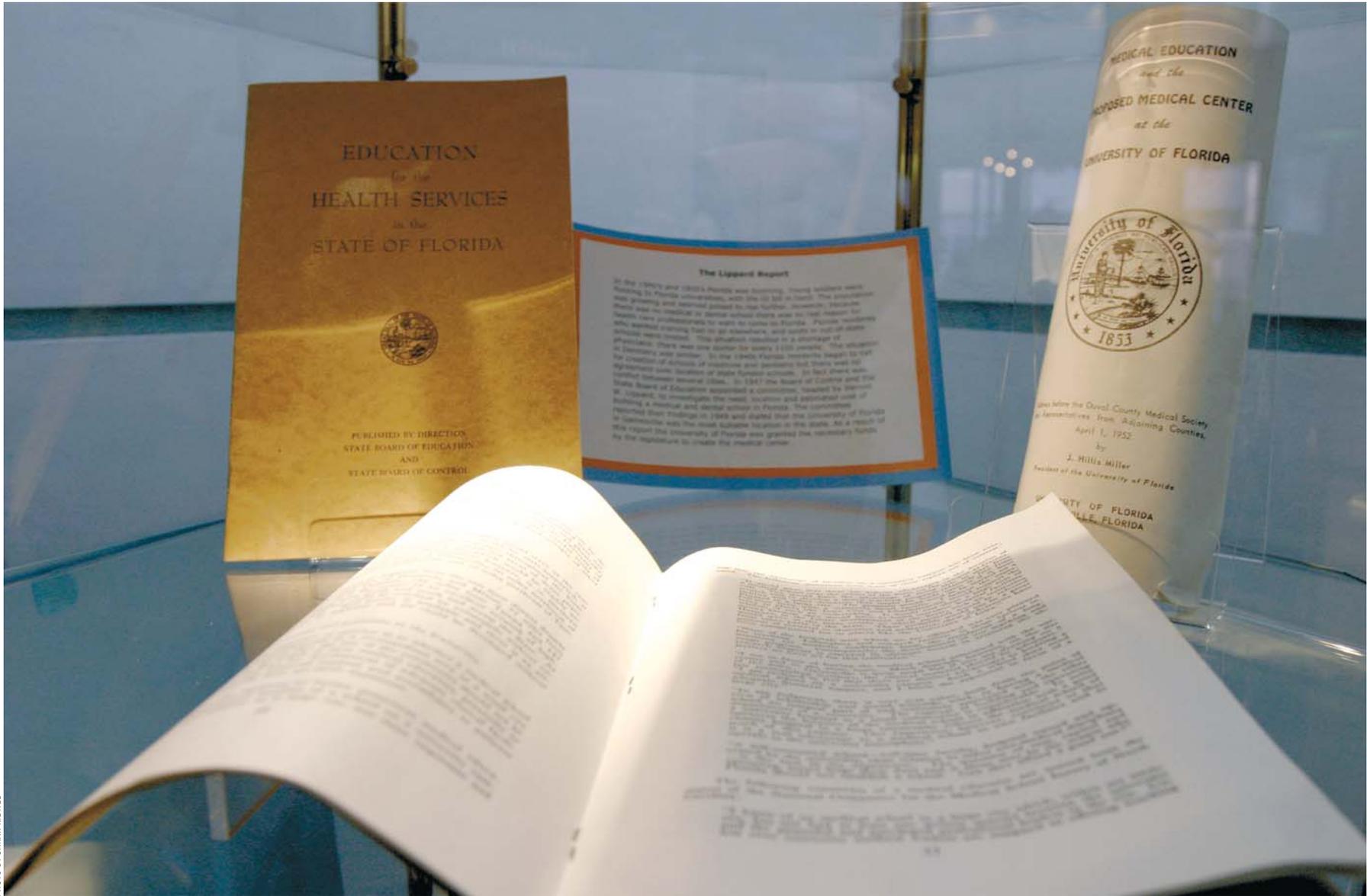


PHOTO BY SARAH MEWEL

Contents of the original HSC time capsule, which are displayed in the lobby of the Medical Sciences Building.



Unearthing history: Time capsule captures HSC in 1955

New time capsule to be planted next month

By April Frawley Birdwell

Camera bulbs flashed as Florida’s then-Secretary of State R.A. Gray placed the time capsule inside the unsealed cornerstone.

It was March 26, 1955, and inside the capsule were papers and reports documenting plans for the new J. Hillis Miller Health Center to explain to future generations the importance of the work that would take place inside the walls of the yet-to-be-built building. A small radioactive “time capsule” of carbon-14 was included so the contents could one day be dated.

The bricks were sealed. Onlookers and dignitaries left. And 50 years of progress sprang up around the cornerstone and the time capsule inside. The HSC grew. Students graduated. New buildings were constructed, one of them covering the

cornerstone and turning it into just another piece of wall in an emergency generator room on the ground floor of the Academic Research Building.

The time capsule could have been forgotten, like dozens of others throughout history, misplaced or lost under new construction. But it wasn’t.

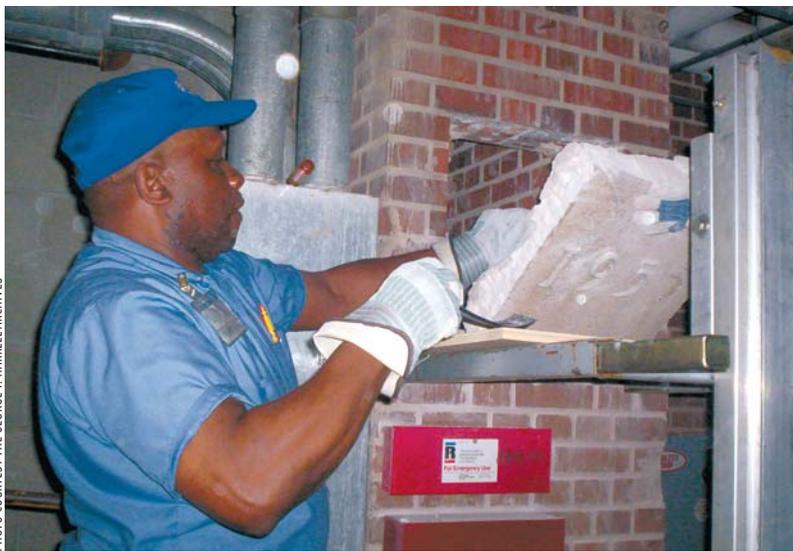
Last year, Health Science Center physical plant workers quietly exhumed the capsule from the cornerstone to commemorate the center’s 50th anniversary. The items are on display in the lobby of the Medical Sciences Building, including the radioactive C-14 capsule from the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies.

“They really were planning for the future,” said Nina Stoyan-Rosenzweig, the HSC’s archivist. “The planners probably thought some engineer 10,000 years from now would find (the time capsule).”

Although the term “time capsule” wasn’t coined until 1937, people have been trying



In a March 26, 1955 ceremony, the HSC time capsule was bricked in and sealed with a dated cornerstone.



HSC physical plant employees unearthed the pill-shaped capsule last year.



Inside the vacuum-packed metal cylinder, all items were wrapped in asbestos.

Inside the new, larger capsule will be gear from each of the HSC colleges, letters from current deans to future deans and memorabilia that sums up life in 2006. Newspapers, magazines, photographs and even a cellular phone will be included.

to preserve the history of their time for thousands of years, according to the International Time Capsule Society.

The society, which tracks time capsule activity across the world, is housed at Oglethorpe University, where one of the largest and most well-known time capsules was assembled in 1940. The Crypt of Civilization holds thousands of pages of microfilm, newsreels, toys, newspapers, audio recordings, books, games, motion pictures and even something to teach English in case the language is not spoken. The crypt is not supposed to be opened until 8113.

Time capsules were particularly popular in the 1950s and often placed in the cornerstones of new buildings, Stoyan-Rosenzweig said. This was illustrated in a 1955 Looney Tunes cartoon in which a construction worker unearths a capsule containing Michigan J. Frog in one cornerstone and then later replants the singing amphibian in another cornerstone.

“It shows how common in that period it was to place a time capsule in a cornerstone,” said Stoyan-Rosenzweig, who has a copy of the cartoon in her office.

HSC leaders didn’t have a singing frog to worry about when the time capsule was opened last spring, but they did have to take precautions. No one knew if the outer surface of the C-14 vial would be radioactive, so a Geiger counter was in place to monitor radiation levels, Stoyan-Rosenzweig said.

Radiation didn’t pose a problem, but workers found another surprise when the vacuum-packed metal cylinder was unsealed – all the items were wrapped in asbestos. The mineral was widely used as insulation before its cancer-causing properties were known. The materials inside were not returned to the archives until they were asbestos-free, Stoyan-Rosenzweig said.

Aside from the C-14, the capsule also included a five-volume series of books that explain why a health center was needed in Florida; a photograph of J. Hillis Miller, the UF president who pushed for the creation of a health center in Gainesville and died before it was completed; and other documents.

Now, Stoyan-Rosenzweig is collecting items for a new time capsule that will be planted on March 31 near the Academic Research Building and opened on the HSC’s 100th birthday in 2056.

Inside the new, larger capsule will be gear from each of the HSC colleges, letters from current deans to future deans and memorabilia that sums up life in 2006. Newspapers, magazines, photographs and even a cellular phone will be included.

No radiation or asbestos will be included this time, but Stoyan-Rosenzweig laughed and said, “You never know in 50 years what will be considered poisonous or dangerous.” **P**

Medical students find solace on stage

By April Frawley Birdwell

Rebecca Gomez tilted the champagne bottle back, just enough to let the bubbly slide down her throat.

Luckily for the second-year medical student, no professors were there to watch as she staggered across the floor, bottle in hand, and babbled about her mental state to a roomful of senior citizens at The Manor, a Gainesville nursing home, one December night.

And luckily for the seniors, the bottle was empty and Gomez's ramblings were just a scene from the play "Proof," one of several skits Gomez and other UF College of Medicine students performed for the group before the holidays.

Since coming together last year, members of the White Coat Company – a band of medically minded thespians who try to squeeze in a little Shakespeare between anatomy labs and lectures – have kept most of their performances to themselves.

But now the group is trying to expand past the closed doors of their occasional lunchtime improvisational sessions, said Gomez, who formed

"I am convinced that involvement in the arts and humanities can help each person better know themselves, which is a key to being able to better understand patients and families."

— Robert Watson, M.D., senior associate dean

the low-key troupe. The seniors at The Manor served as their first real audience, and plans are under way for a bigger production this spring.

"We're all busy so there's not a lot of time for extra stuff, but I'm hoping that doing this will lay the groundwork for future events," she said.

Gomez, who's been acting for three years and has been involved behind the scenes of theater productions for seven, formed the White Coat



PHOTO BY APRIL FRAWLEY BIRDWELL

Members of the White Coat Company, a medical student acting troop, performed skits and sang songs for seniors at The Manor in Gainesville.

Company to provide another outlet for busy medical students.

"Acting is a really good way to exercise your brain and relax," she said.

Elvy Mercado joined the group to do just that – relax.

"We get bogged down in our classes, so being a part of the company gives me an opportunity to step away from that and just have fun," said Mercado, a second-year medical student who has dabbled in improv acting. "Even if you have exams coming up, you know for that hour (with the group) you can relax."

Chad Mackman, a first-year medical student who minored in theater when he was an undergraduate, agreed, adding, "It's nice to step out of your head and into a character who isn't worried about next week's anatomy test or what's going to be on that day's lab."

But involvement in the arts and humanities could do more than relieve students' tension. It could also help them be better doctors, said Robert Watson, senior associate dean of educational affairs for the

College of Medicine.

"I am convinced that involvement in the arts and humanities can help each person better know themselves, which is a key to being able to better understand patients and families," he said.

The college opened the Thomas H. Maren Medical Student Reading Room to give students a space to express their interests in the arts, and programs like narrative medicine help students strengthen communication skills, he said.

While their medical studies don't give White Coat Company members too much free time for acting, they are preparing at least one more performance this semester. In April they plan to present "The Wizard of Oz" on the pediatrics floor of Shands at UF. They have already recruited a cast of 19 for the production, Gomez said.

"It's really important in medical school to not just study all the time," she said. "You have to find hobbies that you enjoy doing and make time for them." **P**

Gift aids universities in addressing nursing shortage

By Tracy Brown Wright

The nursing shortage in Florida, currently estimated at 34,000 and projected to hit 61,000 by the year 2020, has a negative impact on the quality and availability of health care. In an effort to help relieve that, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida donated \$600,000 each to the University of North Florida and the University of Florida in an effort to address crucial issues in nursing education. The State of Florida will match each gift at \$420,000. UNF and UF were also awarded a \$1.2 million SUCCEED grant from the state to increase the number of nurses who enter Florida's workforce.

In 2004, Northeast Florida hospitals reported that 8.1 percent of nursing positions remained vacant, the same as the statewide average for registered nurse vacancies, according to the Florida Hospital Association.

Hospital studies show that patient care declines and health-care costs increase when there is a nurse shortage. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida gift, combined with matching dollars from the state Legislature, will be applied to expanding the education system, generating more nurses to meet the increasing demand.

"We deeply appreciate the profound generosity of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida," said UNF

President John A. Delaney. "This meaningful gift enables the School of Nursing to sustain the SUCCEED grant and will help to increase student enrollment in our nursing program."

UNF will use the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida gift to hire a professor to work with a database, which is the first of its kind in Jacksonville, allowing the School of Nursing to more efficiently schedule clinical rotations for all schools and health-care organizations in the Jacksonville area. The professor also will staff a patient simulation lab at Shands Jacksonville for clinical education of UNF and UF nursing students as well as Shands staff. This will allow UNF to increase enrollment of baccalaureate nursing students, upgrade technology and optimize the placement of students at clinical sites.

Ultimately, all nursing programs in the North Florida area will benefit from the ability to more adeptly schedule clinical rotations for their students.

"The University of Florida is grateful for the generosity of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida and their dedication to improving nursing education," said UF President Bernard Machen.

Blue Cross Blue Shield's gift to UF will help expand and enhance the North Florida Ph.D. Consortium, which links UF's Ph.D. in Nursing Science Program to students at sites located at UNF, Florida A&M University, Florida State University



BY TRACY BROWN WRIGHT

College of Nursing Dean Kathleen Ann Long, UF President Bernie Machen and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida Vice President of Public Affairs Catherine Kelly.

and the University of West Florida through a cooperative degree approach.

"We recognize how important collaboration is to achieve meaningful progress in easing the nursing shortage," said Robert I. Lufano, M.D., chairman and chief executive officer of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida. "Through our Generation RN program, we are able to support nurse education plus address a critical workforce and health-care need in Florida." **P**

College of Medicine lands eminent speakers for commencement, research events

By Tom Fortner

In fishing parlance, the College of Medicine has reeled in a couple of big ones for two annual events this spring.

Tom Brokaw, the former anchor and managing editor of NBC Nightly News, will be the featured speaker at the college's commencement ceremony May 20.

And Peter Agre, M.D., an oncologist and molecular biologist who won the 2003 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, will keynote COM Research Day activities slated for April 10 – 11.

The recruitment of such luminaries is in keeping with the overarching occasion – the 50th anniversary of the college. Indeed, it was Brokaw's interest in history – he's the author of two books that focused on the World War II generation – that prompted Dean C. Craig Tisher to think the newsman might be enticed to appear.

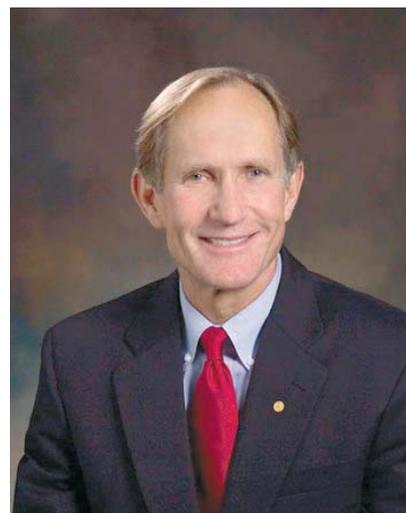
It didn't hurt that Tisher and Brokaw have something in common: Both were raised in Yankton, SD. And although they've never met, a number of common threads run through their lives.

Tisher wrote Brokaw with the request and got a letter of acceptance a few weeks later. "I thought it was a long shot so when we got it I was excited," he said.

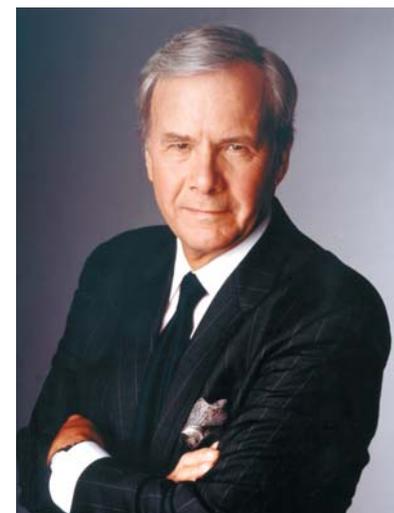
Brokaw stepped down as anchor and managing editor of NBC Nightly News in December 2004 after a 21-year run. He continues to do special reports and to appear during major breaking news events.

The recipient of numerous awards recognizing his journalism and a best-selling author, Brokaw began his journalism career in 1962 in Omaha, Neb. He rapidly climbed the career ladder in television news, with stops in Atlanta and Los Angeles before joining the network news team in 1966. He is a graduate of the University of South Dakota.

Peter Agre, a longtime faculty member at the Johns Hopkins University School



Peter Agre

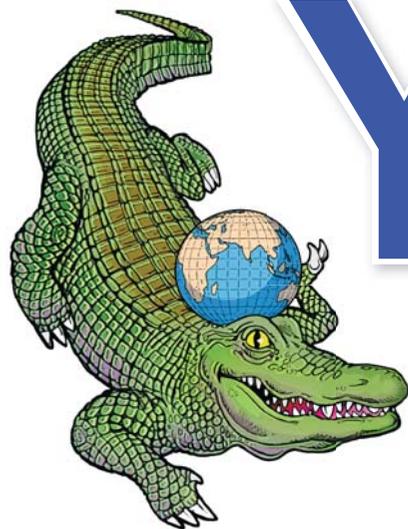


Tom Brokaw

of Medicine who recently relocated to Duke University Medical Center, won the Nobel Prize for his laboratory's discovery of the proteins that regulate and facilitate water molecule transport through cell membranes, a process essential to all living organisms.

No longer working in the lab, Agre joined Duke last summer as vice chancellor for science and technology. He also has a "Tisher connection," with family roots in South Dakota and a personal friendship with the dean over many years.

Agre was elected to membership in the National Academy of Sciences in 2000 and to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2003. **P**



Year of the Gator



By Melanie Fridl Ross

Bob Frank eyed the fish, and the fish eyed him. It was a split-second showdown with a fortuitous ending... though maybe not for the fish.

Moments before, Frank's Chinese hosts — academicians from Zhengzhou University, situated 450 miles south of Beijing on more than 1,000 acres near the Yellow River — reached to the center of the table, and with a carefully orchestrated flourish, spun the serving platter where it sat, still steaming.

That's when Frank, dean of the College of Public Health and Health Professions, began to worry. He watched as it revolved, slowing until it stopped and pointed directly at him.

"I thought I was going to have to eat the fish head!" he recalled a couple weeks after returning from his December visit.

But the fish wasn't just dinner. A Chinese symbol of good luck, it was part of a longstanding tradition, one that to his relief did not include feasting on parts of the fish anatomy most Americans are accustomed to sliding down the disposal. The ritual merely meant that as guest of honor he was to immediately toast everyone at the table, a fitting start to a trip that heralded the beginning of something UF officials say holds incredible promise — the creation of educational initiatives and research collaborations with a country long known for prizing scholarly endeavors.

Of course, it will take more than just good fortune to forge these new relationships. But the hard work necessary to put such programs together is well under way. Health Science Center officials in particular are keen on the possibilities.

So when the Chinese New Year kicked off Jan. 29 and more than a billion citizens who make up one of the world's oldest living civilizations began celebrating the Year of the Dog, UF administrators begged to differ.

For them, it was as if China were ushering in the Year of the Gator.

East meets West: Exporting education

Lately it seems all eyes are on China. As it gears up to host the 2008 Summer Olympics and the 2010 World Expo, its government is pouring billions into educational reforms and tourism. In the past 25 years, it has evolved from a system largely closed to international trade to one that is market-oriented with a rapidly growing private sector, thrusting China onto the global economic stage. Last year China's economy ranked second-largest in the world, trailing only the United States.

In Gainesville, China's new-found cachet has not gone unnoticed.

That's in part thanks to Sherman Bai, Ph.D., a UF engineering professor whose hometown is 300 miles to the south of Beijing. Bai encouraged William Riffie, Ph.D., dean of the College of Pharmacy and associate provost for distance, continuing and executive education, to set his sights on the Far East.

Bai now oversees UF's International Center in Beijing, which opened last June in a high-rise commercial building on the campus of China Agricultural University, adjacent to 11 other universities. All told, nearly 50 universities can be found in Beijing, Bai said, with a student population teetering close to the 1 million mark.

"In the last five years, China's put a big emphasis on improving the educational system," Bai said. "One major change was to open up the education market to allow foreign institutions to come to China. Although still there are some regulations on what kind of things institutions can do in China, compared to five or 10 years ago it's a much more relaxed environment.

"Economic development in China is going very fast; the living standards for common people have been improving quite a bit," he added. "Traditionally the Chinese are very interested in education. Because now people have more money, education is at the top of the list of every family."

The colleges of Pharmacy, Nursing and Public Health and Health Professions are seizing the moment. The International Center is largely focusing on health and medical programs, and all three colleges have sent emissaries to China to scout opportunities and, conversely, to let the Chinese know what's available back in Gainesville.

"There's been a sense at the University of Florida that we need to have larger global outreach, that without it we are not going to be the kind of university we aspire to be," Frank said. "Most of our efforts have been in that vein, to try to develop effective global partners around a research or education agenda."

The interest goes hand in hand with the complexity of the public health problems facing Asia.

"After the SARS epidemic, China did an internal assessment of its public health infrastructure and realized it needs to make changes," he said. "The advantage of their centralized government is they created a model that requires their public health officials to get more knowledge. There's more internal spending on public health than there's been previously and that affects both hospital administrators and traditional public health administration."

Bai and three staff members act as liaisons between UF faculty and their counterparts at Chinese schools, making crucial contacts and working to win the attention of government officials who approve such collaborations. They also help UF faculty navigate the cultural nuances of negotiating business deals in China and provide language interpretation.

"With the aegis of this center we're able to engage in conversations that are more practical and continuous and directed than I have with any other country," Frank said.

Bai called the size of the booming educational market in China "mind-boggling." "It's important to have UF's presence in China because it helps UF get a better reputation there," he said. "It also provides opportunities for our students and faculty to go to China for research conferences and other programs like summer courses.

"The second area is to promote UF, to attract good students to come to UF to study," he said. "People are starting to notice us."



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAROL REED ASH

College of Nursing Dean Kathleen Ann Long (left) and Dr. Carol Reed Ash stop to enjoy a garden while visiting several Chinese universities to discuss future collaborations.

Passport to partnerships

UF officials are in discussions with a half-dozen Chinese universities. They include Tsinghua University, Capital University of Medical Sciences and Zhengzhou. Faculty are flying to China. Chinese delegations are arriving in Gainesville.

“What the Chinese are investing in education is stunning,” said Frank, who has visited China twice in the past six months. “They’ve made enormous strides in a very short time.”

Ian Tebbett, associate dean for distance education and a College of Pharmacy professor, recently signed an agreement with Capital to launch online master’s-level forensic science programs focused on drug chemistry and toxicology this fall. In addition, this spring a new certificate program in death investigation will begin.

Most international students interested in UF are working professionals who are seeking new skills to expand their job opportunities, Riffée said.

UF’s International Center will sponsor the “China-U.S. Collaboration in Education” conference June 8-11 in Beijing. The Florida-focused meeting will give universities a chance to talk about their strengths and to find suitable matches with their counterparts in China interested in establishing educational exchanges and research collaborations. Attendees will include UF President Bernard Machen, state university provosts and keynote speaker Jack M. Wilson, Ph.D., president of the University of Massachusetts. Visit www.doce-conferences.ufl.edu/beijing/ for more information.

“We’re looking to use that model to expand other distance educational offerings in China,” Tebbett said. “We can attract students or involve students in the University of Florida, which spreads the name of the university — part of the whole ‘Gator Nation’ idea. Some of these students will eventually come to UF as graduate students. A lot of good things come out of that.”

Two years ago College of Nursing Dean Kathleen Long, Ph.D., R.N., and Carol Reed Ash, Ed.D., R.N., a recently retired professor who still heads the college’s international affairs committee, traveled to a town outside Shanghai on a fact-finding mission. They are now exchanging information with Chinese officials about UF’s master’s and doctoral programs and are considering a request to bring Chinese nurses to UF for additional study.

“I think it’s a two-way street — what do they need and what do we have that will help serve the mission of the college overall,” Ash said. “We’re waking up to the fact that it’s a big world out there. We’re teaching across the globe. That’s the key — we learn from them and they learn from us.”

Going the distance

It’s not just China. Korea, Thailand, India, Jordan, Japan, Poland, the Yucatan— UF’s interests abroad are spreading across the world map.

Attracting foreign students to UF can be difficult because of the expense, despite the weakening dollar, Frank said. Visas also are increasingly hard to come by. So exporting an educational program to a foreign country is desirable, albeit a formidable proposition. There are costs incurred, language barriers to navigate, quality control to consider.

UF officials originally thought they could bring UF degrees to other countries fairly easily, Frank said. But consider an extremely well-paid Chinese citizen typically makes \$12,000 to \$14,000 a year. Running a program in China with American faculty on UF’s standard cost base would be difficult.

“We’re forced into a learning approach that might or might not work depending on the topic,” Frank said. “Even e-learning on our cost base becomes difficult.”

Language barriers also pose problems, so UF launched an online intensive English course in December aimed at international students. In China, UF may elect to hire Chinese instructors who were educated at prestigious American institutions and are comfortable speaking English.

Frank is confident UF will find the right fit. He’s seeking to partner with the Chinese to offer course content at the master’s level in public health and health services administration. UF will likely train Chinese instructors to teach about three courses in China. The students would then travel to Florida to finish their degree.

“The opportunities in China are abundant and important in my view,” Bai said. “The Beijing office is a good starting point. Most people don’t know about UF; they know about Florida because of Disney World. We want to promote UF in China so that three or four years down the line when people think about U.S. education they also think about UF.” **P**



June 8 - 11 | Beijing, China

2006 Beijing Forum
China-U.S. Education Collaboration

Attendees will include UF President Bernard Machen, state university provosts and keynote speaker Jack M. Wilson, Ph.D., president of the University of Massachusetts.

Growth hormone, obesity can trigger sleep apnea in some kids

By April Frawley Birdwell

Growth hormone helps hundreds of children with a rare disorder that causes them to gorge on food, but for some, starting treatment can worsen a dangerous nighttime breathing problem, UF researchers have found.

Growth hormone has shown to be one of the most effective ways to treat children and adults with Prader-Willi syndrome, a disease that compels those

obstructive sleep apnea, such as loud snoring or abnormal daytime sleepiness. Sleep studies are recommended for all obese children, not just those with Prader-Willi, Miller added.

Prader-Willi syndrome is caused by a rare chromosomal defect and occurs in only one of every 12,000 to 15,000 people, according to the Prader-Willi Syndrome Association. Children and adults with the disease have mental impairment, poor muscle tone and appetites so insatiable their parents

“Prader-Willi syndrome highlights the major problem of obesity – it’s more than just overeating. There are genes that control it and other physiological factors that impair health.”

— Bryan E. Hainline, M.D., Ph.D., Indiana University associate professor of pediatrics

afflicted with it to eat nonstop. But UF researchers found that starting treatments can worsen or trigger sleep apnea in obese children exposed to colds, potentially leading to death, according to findings published online recently in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*. Sleep apnea disrupts breathing during sleep and is common among morbidly obese children, including those with Prader-Willi syndrome.

Researchers say that uncovering how to treat obesity and related problems in children genetically wired to be overweight could help them better battle childhood obesity in general.

“Every kid we studied had abnormal sleep at the beginning, before growth hormone,” said Jennifer Miller, M.D., an assistant professor of pediatrics and the study’s lead author. “On growth hormone, most of them got better but not all of them. The ones that got worse tended to be school age. Some of them were just entering school and then they were coming home with upper-respiratory infections.

“The combination of starting growth hormone, still having weak muscle tone, having an illness and/or being obese tends to put you at risk for having really bad obstructive sleep apnea.”

The researchers urge doctors to monitor patients’ sleep before and during treatment for signs of

often have to lock up food. Many patients become morbidly obese.

Overall, about 9 million children in the United States are overweight or obese. That’s about three times as many as in 1980, and the causes vary, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Prader-Willi syndrome highlights the major problem of obesity – it’s more than just overeating,” said Bryan E. Hainline, M.D., Ph.D., an Indiana University associate professor of pediatrics who specializes in pediatric metabolism and genetics. “There are genes that control it and other physiological factors that impair health.”

Obesity also can lead to severe respiratory problems as fat accumulates in the upper body and throat, and these effects cause the most problems for obese patients, including those with Prader-Willi, Hainline said. The UF study highlights this, he added.

Growth hormone was approved in the United States to treat Prader-Willi in 2000, but several children with the disease died after beginning the treatments. All died in their sleep and had been battling infections. To understand the problem, UF researchers decided to study how growth hormone affected sleep, monitoring patients on the therapy closely and performing sleep studies before and



Jennifer Miller, M.D., an assistant professor of pediatrics and the study’s lead author.

during treatment, Miller said.

The researchers studied 25 children and adults with Prader-Willi syndrome, a large sample for such a rare disorder. Four school-age children had increased difficulty breathing at night shortly after the treatment began. All began having problems after they were exposed to upper respiratory infections in school, the findings show.

The children’s muscles were so weak at the beginning of the treatment they couldn’t breathe with a stuffed-up nose, Miller said. Growth hormone worsened the problem, causing the tonsils to swell and exacerbating their sleep apnea.

To keep patients safe, the researchers suggest doctors perform sleep studies on children before and during treatment. Some children may also need to have their tonsils removed if necessary.

“That is why this study should be done, because we don’t know who will be vulnerable to having problems during sleep,” Miller said. 

Cells can live without molecules once considered essential

By Lindy McCollum-Brounley

Leave it to the bacteria that cause tooth decay to be able to live without something all cells were thought to require.

Scientists have long believed a certain biochemical pathway involved in the folding and delivery of proteins to cell membranes is essential for survival. Now University of Florida researchers have discovered that *Streptococcus mutans*, the decay-causing organism that thrives in many a mouth, can do just fine without it.

The findings, reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, have rocked the cellular biology scientific community, which has long considered the pathway to be crucial. The report may also explain why strains of the bacteria can survive in the harsh acidic environment they create in the mouth.

“We were met with skepticism ... because the dogma was that this biochemical pathway is key for all living cells,” said study investigator Jeannine Brady, Ph.D., an associate professor of oral biology at the College of Dentistry. “As far as we know, this is the first example of any bacteria that can cope without this pathway; all of the existing literature indicated it is vital.”

The signal recognition particle, or SRP, pathway

is a primary mechanism by which proteins are chaperoned from the cellular assembly lines where they are made to the protective outer surface of the cells where they are inserted.

In an effort to understand how best to combat the tooth-decaying properties of *S. mutans*, Brady and her team set out to learn how the organism was able to survive its own acid. To find out, the researchers tinkered with systematically turning off several genes, individually and in combination, to see how the bacteria responded.

“We found *S. mutans* can survive, with normal growth, without the SRP pathway,” said Adnan Hasona, Ph.D., a research assistant professor of oral biology and the study’s lead author.

The bacteria altered to lack SRP components were able to adapt and survive gradual increases in acid resulting from their own metabolism, suggesting a backup pathway was in place.

But, like goldfish dropped in new water, the altered bacteria could not contend with sudden environmental change. When artificially shocked with acid to a pH below that where tooth demineralization begins, the altered bacteria became sick and unable to grow. Shocking the bacteria with other environmental stressors, such as high salt levels or the presence of hydrogen peroxide, also caused them to weaken, Hasona said.



PHOTO BY SARAH KIEWEL

Study investigator Jeannine Brady is an associate professor of oral biology at the College of Dentistry.

“So, at least in this organism, we learned the SRP pathway seems to enable it to respond rapidly to environmental stress, but it was not at all necessary for the organism’s viability during non-stress conditions,” Brady said. **P**

Black baby girls more likely to live when born very premature

Black baby girls born weighing 2.2 pounds or less are more than twice as likely to survive as white baby boys born at the same weight, when many preemies are still too tiny to make it on their own, UF researchers have found.

Analyzing data from more than 5,000 premature births, UF researchers pinpointed a link between gender and race and the survival rates of babies born at extremely low weights, according to findings released in the January issue of the journal *Pediatrics*.

It’s the first scientific evidence of a phenomenon doctors have observed for years, said Steven B. Morse, M.D., M.P.H., a UF assistant professor of pediatrics and the article’s lead author.

UF researchers studied vital statistics from 5,076 babies born in Florida between 1996 and 2000 and weighing less than 1,000 grams. The influence of gender and race on babies’ survival rates was more noticeable the smaller the infants were, the research shows. The higher the weights and developmental ages were at birth, the more survival rates increased for all babies.

For Morse, the next big question isn’t why these babies survive but what happens to them when they do. He now plans to study what happens to extremely low-birth weight children, who are more prone to health problems, as they age.

“Survival is not everything,” he said. “It’s a first step. Probably a bigger question to answer is quality of life. That’s the next step.”

— April Frawley Birdwell

Diabetes complications rooted in faulty cell repair

UF researchers say primitive cells that act like molecular maintenance men — traveling throughout the body to repair damaged blood vessels — become too rigid to move in patients with diabetes, fueling the disease’s vascular complications.

But they have found a way to restore the cells’ flexibility, at least in the laboratory, according to findings published in the January issue of the journal *Diabetes*.

Having diabetes markedly raises the risk of developing a host of other ailments, many of which arise after blood vessels suffer damage, spurring the accumulation of fatty deposits in the arteries.

“We’re interested in what happens in the body at the molecular level to cause these life-threatening problems,” said Mark S. Segal, Ph.D., an assistant professor of nephrology, hypertension and transplantation at UF’s College of Medicine. “Our work is focused on understanding why diabetic patients are at increased risk for these other diseases.”

The problem is rooted in the body’s response to vascular injury. The bone marrow churns out cells crucial to repairing the damaged lining of blood vessels. But sometimes they fail to report for duty.

“Part of the defect we think is occurring in diabetic patients is these cells do not carry out appropriate repair, and therefore these patients are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease and other complications,” Segal said.

In the future, patients with diabetes and atherosclerosis who require angioplasty might receive injections of their own repair cells. The cells would be removed, incubated with nitric oxide to improve their function and then returned. They would theoretically help blood vessels heal more quickly, and perhaps keep new fatty deposits from forming, Segal speculated.

— Melanie Fridl Ross

High blood pressure's heritage

UF researchers screening patients to find the culprit

By Denise Trunk

When it comes to medical conditions, not all people are created equal. Blacks, for example, are at extremely high risk for developing high blood pressure and its complications such as stroke, heart attack and kidney failure.

Physicians at the UF's College of Medicine are working to address that discrepancy. In cooperation with community outreach programs, the doctors are conducting free blood pressure screenings at various community locations this spring.

High blood pressure, or hypertension, can start at a young age and is often difficult to control in blacks.

"Because African-Americans are three times more likely develop kidney failure as a result of hypertension than Caucasians, regular screenings become more important."

— Titte Srinivas, M.D.

Early hypertension is referred to as the "silent killer" because patients with the condition often do not feel any discomfort or report any symptoms until there is advanced organ damage or failure.

Fortunately, it is easy to diagnose high blood pressure by measuring it with a simple blood pressure cuff, said Titte Srinivas, M.D., an assistant professor in the college's division of nephrology, hypertension and transplantation. If detected early, hypertension can be treated effectively with medication. Even those who have had complications from elevated blood pressure benefit greatly from lowering it, he added.

"Because African-Americans are three times more likely develop kidney failure as a result of hypertension than Caucasians, regular screenings become more important," said Srinivas, who is part of a team conducting research into new methods to improve blood pressure control in blacks. Sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, the project's leader is Richard J. Johnson, M.D., the J. Robert



Dr. Srinivas checks Milli Smith's blood pressure at a hypertension screening booth set up at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Multi-Purpose Center in east Gainesville.

Cade professor of nephrology and division chief. Johnson first discovered the mechanisms underlying hypertension and its relationship to elevated uric acid levels in previous research.

Johnson and his research team, including Srinivas, and Mark Segal, M.D., Ph.D., an assistant professor, are continuing research into the causes and effects of hypertension in African-Americans. It has long been known that gout, a disease that causes painful inflamed joints in those with high uric acid, is more prevalent in blacks. While gout's association with elevated blood pressure has been known for many years, it is only recently that doctors have begun to understand its relationship to elevated blood pressure, Srinivas said.

In this current NIH study, the UF team will investigate basic mechanisms underlying the development of high blood pressure, atherosclerosis and the health of the inner lining of the arteries, or

endothelium. They will then study methods of improving blood pressure control using a medication called chlorthalidone, along with measuring uric acid levels in the blood.

The UF nephrology division's blood pressure screening program in the Gainesville area will continue throughout the spring and is free and available to everyone. This program was created in close cooperation with Alachua County Commissioner Cynthia Chestnut in her role as director of the UF Shands Eastside Community Practice Education and Community Outreach program.

"The screenings Dr. Srinivas and his team are doing provide an extremely important early warning that could save lives," Chestnut said.

Srinivas and his team will conduct screenings in Gainesville and surrounding communities. For more information on upcoming screenings, visit www.shands.org/eastsideeducation, or call 265-7136. **P**

UF investigators to study effects of Florida's sweeping Medicaid reform

By Jill Pease

UF researchers have received a \$2.5 million contract to evaluate the outcome of Florida's new high-profile plan to reform Medicaid.

During the five-year study, UF investigators will conduct an organizational analysis of the reform, determine its fiscal impact and measure the satisfaction, quality of care and outcomes experienced by enrollees and health-care providers as the reform is implemented.

Considered one of the most aggressive state Medicaid reform initiatives, Florida's plan will attempt to address challenges associated with the rapidly growing program, which currently provides medical coverage for more than 2 million of the state's low-income families, elderly and people with disabilities, at a cost of \$15 billion a year.

"The proposed Medicaid reform program is very interesting," said R. Paul Duncan, Ph.D., the study's principal investigator and chair of the department of health services research, management and policy in the College of Public Health and Health Professions. "Medicaid is a huge, expensive and important program, and every state struggles to manage it effectively. Florida's reform plan is very ambitious. What happens in

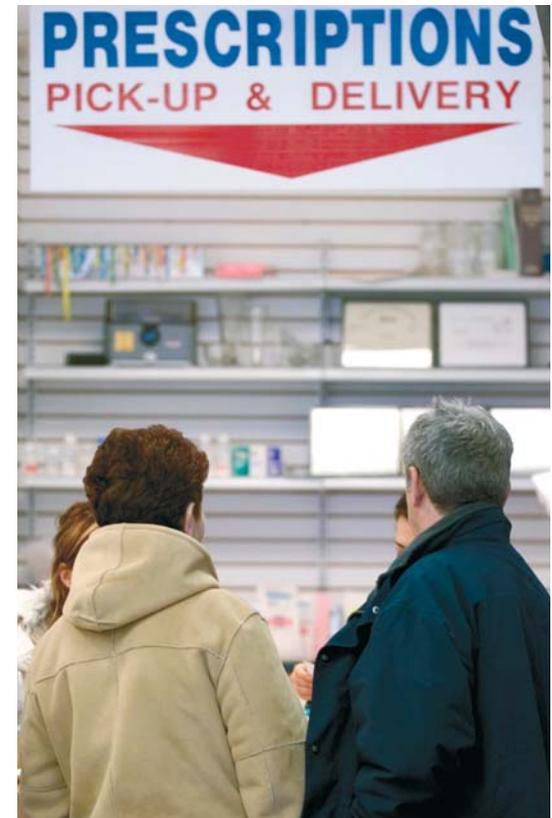
Florida will be watched by 49 other states."

Florida's Medicaid reform is modeled on private sector managed care plans. Lawmakers hope that under the new program, Medicaid participants will have more flexibility in choosing their health-care providers. In addition, the reform program is intended to foster competition among providers, who will bid on contracts to offer services and be accountable for the enrollees' care, saving the state money without compromising the quality of care.

The UF research team, which also includes department faculty members Allyson Hall, Ph.D., Christy Lemak, Ph.D., and Niccie McKay, Ph.D., will provide six-month progress reports on the research to the state's Agency for Health Care Administration.

They will begin work in Broward and Duval counties, where the reform program will first be implemented. Research will extend to Baker, Clay, Nassau and possibly other counties as the reform demonstration expands.

"Broward and Duval are urban counties while the counties in the second wave are more sparsely populated," Duncan said. "One of the questions we'll need to answer is whether this program works differently in urban and rural settings." **P**



UF veterinary college dean accepts new post at Tennessee

By Sarah Carey

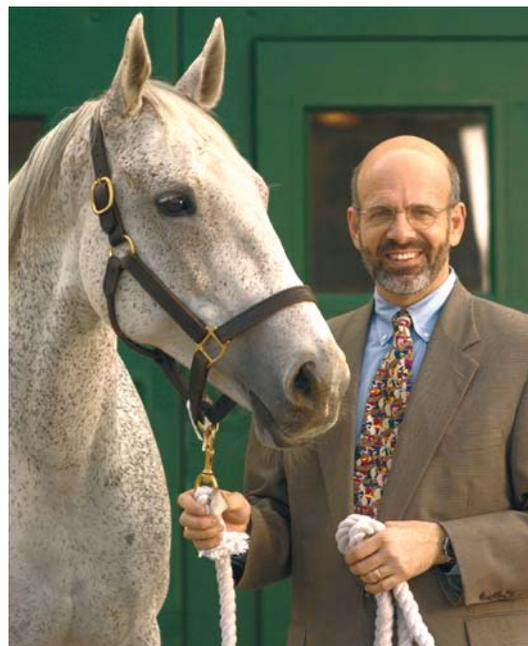
Joseph A. DiPietro, D.V.M., M.S., who has led the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine as dean for the past nine years, has accepted a job as vice president of agriculture at the University of Tennessee.

He will leave the college for his new post on Feb. 20.

"I am saddened at the thought of leaving my many friends, supporters and colleagues at the college and university," DiPietro said. "I have had a wonderful and rewarding time here and have appreciated the strong broad-based support I have received in both times of success and those of disappointment. UF and the College of Veterinary Medicine will remain in a very special place in my heart."

Vice President for Health Affairs Doug Barrett and Vice President of the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Jimmy Cheek announced that a search committee had been formed for a new dean and paid tribute to DiPietro for his many accomplishments.

"During his tenure here, Joe has earned the respect of faculty, staff, and students, the college's research budget has steadily increased, and many innovative educational, clinical and research



Dr. Joseph DiPietro will step down as dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine after nine years to take a position at the University of Tennessee.

initiatives have been implemented," Barrett and Cheek said in a joint statement.

The college's research grants increased from \$5.5 million to \$12.5 million. And annual fundraising totals increased from \$1.9 million to \$7.4 million during Dean DiPietro's tenure.

Chairing the search committee will be Teresa Dolan, dean of the UF College of Dentistry.

James P. Thompson, D.V.M., Ph.D., has been named interim dean of the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine effective Feb. 20. Thompson, who received both his D.V.M. and Ph.D. degrees from UF and joined the faculty in 1986, currently serves as the college's associate dean of students and instruction.

Board-certified in the specialties of internal medicine, immunology, virology, microbiology and oncology, Thompson has won numerous awards both for his teaching and for his research and has served as academic adviser for dozens of veterinary students, residents and interns over the years. **P**



Thompson

DISTINCTIONS

COLLEGE OF DENTISTRY

M. FRANKLIN DOLWICK,

D.M.D., Ph.D., a professor of oral and maxillofacial surgery and director of hospital dentistry for Shands at UF, in 1980 submitted an article with four collaborators to the *American Journal of Roentgenology*. The article, titled "Arthrotomography of the Temporomandibular Joint," has since become one of the top 100 articles cited over the journal's 100-year history of scientific reporting on medical imaging—swinging in at no. 78 with a total of 178 citations. The achievement was celebrated last month in the centennial issue of *AJR*, the journal of the American Roentgen Ray Society.



Dolwick

RICHARD J. LAMONT,

Ph.D., a professor of oral biology, has been appointed director of translational research and career development. The position is newly instituted to foster the career development of junior and transitioning faculty, and to provide clinical faculty and residents with greater access to the basic science research programs in the college.



Lamont

Lamont's leadership in developing the careers of dental faculty is considered crucial to the successful development of a translational research program within the college that bridges basic science research and clinical practice, ultimately leading to improved patient care.

IVAR A. MJÖR, B.D.S.,

M.D.S., Dr. Odont., a professor of operative dentistry and an Academy 100 eminent scholar, has been tapped to receive the European Federation of Conservative Dentistry's prestigious Award of Excellence during the federation's February meeting



Mjör

in Rome. Mjör, an internationally respected dental educator and researcher, was selected to receive the award in recognition of his outstanding contributions to restorative dentistry in Europe. He is also scheduled to speak on practice-based dental research during the meeting.

The European Federation of Conservative Dentistry is made up of national dental organizations from the countries of France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey.

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

MICHAEL MOSER, M.D.,

an assistant professor of sports medicine in the department of orthopaedics and rehabilitation, is one of three sports medicine physicians selected to participate in the 2006 International Traveling Fellows Program. The traveling fellowship program is an annual scientific and cultural exchange among orthopaedic sports medicine physicians in North America, Europe, Latin America and the Pacific Rim. The American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine and the European Society of Knee Surgery and Arthroscopy founded the traveling fellowship program for sports medicine orthopaedic surgeons.



Moser

KYLE E. RAREY, M.D.,

a professor and associate dean for program evaluation and faculty development, was named president-elect for the Research in Medical Education section of the Association of American Medical College's Group on Education. RIME's mission is to enhance the quality of research in medical education and to promote its application to educational practice. Rarey serves as the coordinator for the college's institutional self-study, a part of the accreditation process of the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, and teaches first-year clinical anatomy. Rarey also



Rarey

directs various faculty development activities that impact faculty, residents and medical students. He has authored 100 peer-reviewed articles and successfully directed NIH-funded research.

SEAN MCGARRY, M.D.,

a second-year oncology fellow in the department of orthopaedics and rehabilitation, has been awarded the 2005 C. Howard Hatcher Pathology Fellowship by the American Orthopaedic Association. The Hatcher Fellowship is designed to enrich orthopaedic surgeons with postgraduate experience in musculoskeletal oncology, with the anticipation of an academic career in musculoskeletal oncology. McGarry is mentored by C. Parker Gibbs, Jr., M.D., Associate Professor in the department of orthopaedics and rehabilitation.



McGarry

ARUN SRIVASTAVA, Ph.D.,

a professor of pediatrics and chief of the pediatrics cellular and molecular therapy division, received \$763,367 in subproject funding from the National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases for his research on liver-directed adeno-associated virus gene therapy for correction of genetic and metabolic abnormalities.



Srivastava

ALEXANDER C.

WAGENAAR, Ph.D., a professor of epidemiology and health policy research, has been inducted as a fellow of the World Innovation Foundation. The foundation was formed by a group of Nobel Laureates to provide innovative consultation and advice to government ministers and others in developing countries on health, poverty reduction, environmental preservation and peacemaking.



Wagenaar



Horodyski



Gravenstein



Lampotang

MARYBETH HORODYSKI, Ed.D., A.T.C., an associate professor of orthopaedics and rehabilitation, and director of orthopaedic research, with co-investigators **SAMSUN LAMPOTANG, Ph.D.,** a professor of anesthesiology, and **NIKOLAUS GRAVENSTEIN, M.D.,** a professor and chair of anesthesiology, have been awarded a \$97,000 research grant from NFL Charities. The award will support their research project "Intermittent Cold and Dry Air Underneath Football Shoulder Pads as a Method to Assist in Temperature Homeostasis: Evaluation of Efficacy." The investigation's goal is to improve injury prevention and treatment as well as athletic performance in the world of sport. The research may lead to improvements in athletes' health care and may help address heat-related situations non-athletes may experience.

DISTINCTIONS

BALIGH YEHIA, a senior, was recently selected for Who's Who in American Universities. Yehia, who is one of only 20 students from UF chosen to receive this prestigious recognition, has also been honored by selection for the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society and the Chapman Humanism Society.



Yehia

the American Medical Writers Association's annual conference administrator for 2005-06. The announcement was made in September at the organization's annual meeting in Pittsburgh, Pa. The American Medical Writers Association, founded in 1940, is the leading professional organization for medical communicators. The international association has more than 5,000 members and is headquartered in Rockville, Md.



Fridl Ross

BRIAN DODGE, Ph.D., an assistant professor in public health programs, received the annual award to a fellow or junior investigator for excellence in a research article, from the Columbia University/New York State Psychiatric Institute HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies. Dodge's paper, "Sexual Health Among Male College Students in the United States and the Netherlands," was published in *American Journal of Health Behavior*.



Dodge

ARNO ZARITSKY, M.D., a professor of pediatrics and chief of the pediatrics critical care division in the college, was recently named chairman of the American Heart Association's Pediatric Resuscitation Committee. Zaritsky led the group as it worked on revisions to resuscitation guidelines for children.



Zaritsky

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

RUSSELL BAUER, Ph.D., a professor in the department of clinical and health psychology, has been named president of the American Psychological Association's division of clinical neuropsychology. The division provides a scientific and professional forum for psychologists interested in the study of relationships between the brain and human behavior.



Bauer

EMILY KUHL, a graduate student in the department of clinical and health psychology, received a graduate research award from the Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology and the American Psychological Foundation. She will receive \$1,000 to support her cardiac psychology research.



Kuhl

VICE PRESIDENT FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS

MELANIE FRIDL ROSS, M.S.J., E.L.S., assistant director of Health Science Center News & Communications, has been named

Know someone who has earned a distinction? Please let us know.
E-mail dtrunk@ufl.edu

GRANTS

Locking down causes of temporomandibular jaw disorder

Lindy McCollum-Brounley

The College of Dentistry is participating in a seven-year, \$19.1 million, federally funded study of the causes and treatments of temporomandibular jaw disorder, or TMJ. The four-center study is based at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and the UF effort, led by Roger Fillingim, Ph.D., an associate professor of community dentistry and behavioral science, will be based in the college's Parker E. Mahan Facial Pain Center.

The study, called Orofacial Pain: Prospective Evaluation and Risk Assessment, or OPPERA, is the first large-scale clinical study of its kind to examine the risk factors that lead to TMJ. OPPERA will track 3,200 healthy volunteers for three to five years to see how many will develop the disorder. The expectation is that patterns in genes and other biologic factors contributing to pain sensitivity, which increase the risk of developing the disorder, may be identified. It is hoped these findings will lead to improved treatments and methods of earlier detection.

Other investigative units participating in the OPPERA study include the University of Buffalo-SUNY and the University of Maryland at Baltimore.

The National Institutes of Health estimate as many as 15 percent of Americans may suffer from TMJ-related jaw pain and restricted movement. TMJ seems to affect women more than men, and the cause of the disorder is often unknown. **P**



Roger Fillingim's research program into temporomandibular jaw disorder, or TMJ, received a \$19.1 million federal grant.

Doctor aims to increase HRT awareness

By April Frawley Birdwell

Hormone replacement therapy can ease hot flashes and other troublesome symptoms of menopause. But some women who would benefit from HRT may never try it because they overestimate the health risks of this treatment, as do their doctors, UF studies have shown.

It's a misunderstanding R. Stan Williams, M.D., and other doctors are trying to change. Williams, the Harry Prystowsky professor of reproductive medicine for the UF College of Medicine, traveled to Washington, D.C., in December to take part in a Jacobs Institute of Women's Health panel addressing the confusion surrounding HRT.

"A significant majority of patients and primary care physicians grossly overestimate the risks, as well as the benefits, of hormone replacement therapy," Williams said a few days before traveling to Washington. "We're just not getting the correct message to patients so they can make up their own minds."

In 2002, preliminary findings from the large, long-term Women's Health Initiative study halted one portion of the trial when researchers discovered that HRT increased the risk of heart disease, breast cancer and other conditions. But the research and media reports that followed did not

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— Stan Williams, M.D.

focus on how these risks would actually affect individual women, causing confusion among patients and doctors.

The reports explained women on HRT had a greater risk for developing certain conditions compared with women who were not taking it, but did not clearly spell out how slight the chances were that this would actually happen, Williams said.

For example, the relative risk of having a heart attack while on an estrogen and progestin treatment was 24 percent, but in regular numbers, or absolute risk, that translates to just one in 1,000 additional women having a heart attack during treatment, Williams said.



Dr. R. Stan Williams took part in a Jacob's Institute of Women's Health panel in Washington, D.C., recently to help clear up the confusion about hormone replacement therapy.

"When we asked patients and doctors what they thought the annual attributable risk was of having a heart attack they said 10 to 30 percent, not .1 percent," Williams said.

Williams has been addressing the problem since the initial WHI findings were released in 2002. Shands at UF was one of the many sites for the study and Williams was a co-investigator. While speaking about the findings after the results were released he began to sense that people did not fully comprehend what the research showed.

This spurred Williams and other researchers to conduct two surveys to gain insight into both patients' and doctors' understanding of the risks and benefits of HRT.

The researchers surveyed 600 primary-care physicians and 1,076 menopausal women. Of the doctors, 67 percent overestimated risks and benefits of HRT, according to findings released last year.

In Washington, Williams spoke to journalists, women's health advocates and congressional staffers and representatives from different government agencies about the risks of HRT. Kim Walsh-Childers, Ph.D., a UF journalism professor, also spoke about the media's role in accurately conveying the Women's Health Initiative findings.

Williams said he hoped by taking part in the panel he could better educate patients about their actual risks and help journalists and investigators understand how to explain information related to HRT.

Relative risk is a technical concept commonly used among researchers, but not one average people usually grasp, Williams said. It's better for patients to explain results of studies like these using absolute risk, numbers that show them what an individual's chances are of developing a problem each year, he added.

"That I think patients can understand," he said. 

UF professor connects meditation to neuroscience

By April Frawley Birdwell

Lou Ritz thought it was the coolest picture in all of science. On one side of the curtain, a man meditated. On the other side, medical machines measured how his body was reacting as his mind delved deep into thought. The black and white photo, featured in a spread about the physiology of meditation in a 1971 copy of *Scientific American*, stuck with Ritz, who was just a college student then. For years, the photo could have summed up his

associate professor of religion, Ritz started a new class for honors undergraduates in the fall called “Neurotheology,” and is slated to give a talk on the topic later this month in the HPNP Auditorium.

“I actually believe strongly that one thing that both meditation and neuroscience have in common is they both use the scientific method,” says Ritz from his office in the McKnight Brain Institute. “Whether it’s meditation, asking the deep personal questions, or neuroscience, asking questions in a laboratory, it still comes down to reading, asking questions, formulating a hypothesis, gathering data

**“Neurotheology:
This is your brain on
meditation!”**

7 p.m. Feb. 28,
HPNP Auditorium

“Why am I here?” Three decades later, Ritz still meditates every day.

“It’s helped me get a better handle, not that I have solved these questions, but it’s given me better insight,” he said. “Meditation is about learning to slow down the mind.”

Having roots in both meditation and neuroscience makes him the perfect instructor for a course like neurotheology, said Allen H. Neims, M.D., Ph.D., a UF professor of pharmacology and therapeutics and director of the Center for Spirituality and Health. Balancing the two topics and encouraging thoughtful discussions would be a tough task for professors not equally interested in both, he said.

“I have come to appreciate how deeply in love he is with the spiritual side of life,” Neims said. “It’s not just a superficial thing for him.”

Elizabeth Humberstone, a junior neuroscience major, has taken three of Ritz’s classes at UF, including the inaugural neurotheology class, and she says the professor’s love of neuroscience and meditation is evident in class. He’s the type of professor who can answer her questions about medical school one day and talk about the meaning of consciousness the next, she said.

“You can tell he does this because he enjoys it,” she said. “It comes out in the way he teaches. He guides us but doesn’t force anything on us. (The class) is very thought-provoking.”

Ritz, whose main duties at UF include running the medical neuroscience course in the College of Medicine, acknowledges some people may not see the same connections he does between neuroscience and meditation. But more and more people are getting interested, including students, he says.

“I’m not pushing one position or another,” he said. “I want to explore provocative positions ... teach them a little about science, a little about meditation. These are the two most exciting topics in the world for me — meditation and neuroscience. And I’m able to combine them.” **P**



Lou Ritz, a UF neuroscience professor, will give a talk on neurotheology later this month with Gene Thursby, associate professor of religion.

own life, a neuroscientist by day, a contemplative thinker interested in meditation and its effects on the body and mind by night, the two sides connected, yet separate.

It wasn’t until the UF Center for Spirituality and Health opened that Ritz, Ph.D., an associate professor of neuroscience and associate director of the center, finally had an arena to explore the relationship between both his passions. Now, just as interest in the mind’s role in mystical matters is on the rise, Ritz has become a master of combining neuroscience with spirituality. With Gene Thursby,

and either accepting or rejecting your hypothesis.”

Ritz has been studying both neuroscience and meditation, separately, for 35 years.

But while his career revolved around neuroscience — he spent 20 years on spinal cord injury research — meditation was more of a personal interest. He didn’t talk about the two topics with the same people, he says.

He tried meditation for the first time when he was a college student. He was interested in Eastern religions and liked the idea of exploring the most personal questions of life, like “Who am I?” or

Leading oncologist takes on new role at proton facility

By April Frawley Birdwell

Anationally known oncologist who served as a UF department chairwoman for 13 years has been named medical director of the university's new proton therapy institute in Jacksonville.

Nancy Mendenhall, M.D., has left her post as chairwoman of the College of Medicine's radiation oncology department in Gainesville to lead medical operations at the new facility, which will offer a precise form of radiation that could reduce the risk of complications and improve cure rates in cancer patients when it opens later this year.

Using protons to combat tumors allows doctors to treat cancer more aggressively because they can apply a higher dose of radiation than they would with conventional therapy. The tightly focused

treatment targets malignancies, yet inflicts little damage on surrounding tissues. As a result, many patients experience fewer side effects. Only three other centers in the country offer this form of therapy.

"I am so excited about this," Mendenhall said. "I've always liked every job that I have had, but I think I am most excited about this. What we envision is a maximally efficient clinical and research operation to investigate the best use of protons and proton therapy."

Mendenhall, who first suggested the idea of UF building a proton therapy center in 1998, also will serve as associate chairwoman of the radiation oncology department in Jacksonville. Robert J. Amdur, M.D., has been named interim chairman of the radiation oncology department in Gainesville.

"Dr. Mendenhall was the inspiration behind the development of the proton



Nancy Mendenhall, M.D., has been named medical director of the university's new proton therapy institute in Jacksonville.



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beam therapy facility on our Jacksonville campus," said C. Craig Tisher, M.D., dean of the College of Medicine. "She has now accepted the challenge to prepare the facility to begin patient treatments in mid-2006 in her new role as its medical director."

Mendenhall joined the UF faculty in 1984 as an assistant professor. She was named chairman of the radiation oncology department in 1992 and earned the rank of full professor two years later.

When she was named chairwoman in 1992, Mendenhall hoped to strengthen clinical research in the radiation oncology department, build on its physics program and start a cancer biology program, goals she accomplished during her tenure.

But Mendenhall particularly relishes the chance to help establish the proton therapy institute, a facility she believes will dramatically improve treatment for cancer patients. After initially suggesting the idea, she also served on the facility's steering committee.

"We've accumulated experience over the years, and technology, to create from the ground level a product that will be better than anything we have had in the past," she said. **P**