

UF Health Science
CENTER
Celebrating 50 Years

Successful alumni ④

Shark sense ⑧

Knock-kneed filly ⑭

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ON THE COVER: Florida is a potential port of call for a host of infectious diseases. The Health Science Center is poised to fight back, marshaling resources through the Emerging Pathogens Initiative, a multidisciplinary endeavor uniting researchers campuswide in the quest to combat the threat to people, plants and animals.

Give kids A SMILE

UF dental senior Lauren Leslie and an Alachua County elementary student engage in waiting room activities during the Feb. 3 Give Kids a Smile screening day at UF dental clinics. The event provided sealants, fluoride treatments, X-rays and treatment plans for 165 Alachua County elementary school children in preparation for the Feb. 24 treatment phase. During the treatment phase, 25 dentists from the Alachua County Dental Association joined Project: Dentists Care Inc., and faculty and students of the UF College of Dentistry, Santa Fe Community College Dental Hygiene Program and the ACORN Clinic to deliver dental care to children throughout the county.



PHOTO BY LINDY MCCOLLUM-BROUNLEY

COLLEGE OF NURSING TO CELEBRATE A HERITAGE OF RESEARCH

On March 31, the College of Nursing will honor its heritage of nursing research with its 50th anniversary commemorative Malasanos Distinguished Lectureship and Research Day. Events will run from 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Keynote speaker Anna Schwartz, Ph.D., A.R.N.P., F.A.A.N., a noted researcher on cancer management through physical activity, will speak to faculty, students and other health professionals on "Physical Activity in the Care of Cancer Patients and Survivors: Exercise Prescription and Clinical Recommendations." Schwartz's speech will begin at 9 a.m.

Schwartz is an alumna of the UF College of Nursing and an author, researcher, educator and advanced practice nurse. She currently serves as an associate research professor at the University of Washington, and resides in Flagstaff, Ariz. She maintains a practice at the Northern Arizona Cancer Center as a nurse practitioner and is the breast center program coordinator.

She recently published *Cancer Fitness: Exercise Program for Patients and Survivors*, a culmination of years of research that gives cancer patients a scientifically based program for physical activity and symptom management.

The Malasanos Distinguished Lectureship brings distinguished speakers to the university every two years to discuss a wide variety of health topics of interest to clinicians, patients and the public. The lectureship was endowed in 1992 in honor of John Malasanos, husband of former College of Nursing Dean Lois Malasanos.

The College of Nursing Research Day, held in conjunction with the lectureship, will feature more than 35 faculty and student research poster presentations in areas such as adult and elderly nursing, pain, health-care environments and systems, and women's, children's and family nursing. For more information, call (352) 273-6321.

THE BEST ON DISPLAY AT COLLEGE RESEARCH DAYS

This is the time of year when poster sessions take over lobbies and luncheon areas of the HSC. A list of what to look for follows:

College of Dentistry Research Day
Events begin at 8 a.m. April 7 in D3-3.

College of Medicine Research Day
Events begin at 8:15 a.m. April 11 in the HPNP Building's reception area.

College of Public Health and Health Professions
Poster session begins at 9 a.m. March 20 in the HPNP Building's reception area. This is a students-only event.

Medical Student Research Day
All day March 6 on the first floor of the Communicore Building in front of the HSC Libraries.

Women's Health Research Day
Begins at 8 a.m. March 24 at the Paramount Conference Center.

KATRINA RELIEF 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.



Maren Reading Room dedication celebration

Mrs. Emily Sabah-Maren (right) attended with her friend (left) the first-ever medical student creativity awards and annual Maren room dedication in February. The Thomas H. Maren Medical Student Reading room was named after Sabah-Maren's late husband, who was one of the College of Medicine's founding faculty members and a lover of literature.

MARCH OF DIMES WALKAMERICA WANTS YOU

It is not known what causes half of all premature births. The March of Dimes' biggest fundraiser, WalkAmerica, supports lifesaving research and innovative programs to protect babies from serious threats to their health and well-being: prematurity, birth defects and low birthweight. You can help save babies by participating in the 2006 WalkAmerica on March 25 in Gainesville. WalkAmerica urges you to join a walking team, create your own team and/or recruit others to participate in this effort.

This year the March of Dimes National Ambassador is 5-year-old Alexa Ostolaza, a former patient of Shands Children's Hospital. She is the daughter of Jessica Ostolaza, a radiology technician at Shands AGH, and Josue Ostolaza, a deputy sheriff for the Alachua County Sheriff's Office.

The 2006 WalkAmerica co-chairs for Shands HealthCare are Marilyn Tubb, Shands HealthCare vice president for community affairs, and Fred Hamilton, facility operations supervisor for University of Florida Physicians. To join a team, contact Hamilton at hamilfa@shands.ufl.edu or Tubb at tubbml@shands.ufl.edu.

Most Likely to Succeed

Celebrating decades of HSC student success stories

By April Frowley Birdwell

When the University of Florida Health Science Center opened its doors to students in 1956, no one knew what kind of effect these students and those who followed them would have on the world.

The six colleges of the HSC have produced thousands of health professionals during the past 50 years. One has made discoveries that have changed the way the

world sees drug addiction. Another has saved lives with research that shows how well-trained nurses can make a difference in patient care. But nearly all these alumni have spent their lives trying to help other people.

The HSC has produced too many successful alums to name in one issue, but the *POST* has highlighted a handful who have dedicated their lives to helping others.



Dr. Craig Oldham (center, back row) with his family and Dean Teresa Dolan (right, back row).

College of Dentistry

Craig Oldham, D.M.D., 1992

Craig Oldham is an avid Gator Sports aficionado, but college sports are not what make his blood run orange and blue. It's the love of his profession and the alma mater that educated him to excel in it—the UF College of Dentistry.

Since graduating in 1992, Oldham has paid his dues to become an established and respected member of Florida's dental community — first as a young associate in a Brandon dental practice and now as a business owner, with partner Anthony Adams, of Brandon Dental Care.

Even with a demanding business and family life, Oldham finds time to serve on the Admissions Committee, wading through more than 1,300 applications for the 80 spots in the college's entering dentistry class. He's also an officer on the board of the college's Academy of Alumni & Friends.

Oldham, always active with his own class, has worked hard as class leader to generate participation and support for college programs from his classmates. But he's also put his money where his mouth is, donating to the college's General Dentistry Endowment Fund and bequeathing \$100,000 to the College of Dentistry.

Oldham gets the big picture of how supporting dental education in Florida translates into serving Florida's residents. His dedication of time, effort and financial commitment sets the benchmark for alumni support and helps the college graduate outstanding young dentists to join Florida's dental community.

College of Medicine

Peter Small, M.D., 1985

Peter Small, M.D., had established himself as a prominent faculty member and tuberculosis researcher with a well-funded lab at the Stanford University School of Medicine.

But when he was offered the chance to direct how millions of dollars would be invested in tuberculosis research for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the UF College of Medicine alumnus could not resist.

"It was the allure of being in a position to make a real impact," Small said.

In 2003, the College of Medicine added Small to its Wall of Fame, a high honor for any alum, but especially one who grew up at UF. Small's father, Parker Small, M.D., a professor emeritus of pathology, joined the UF faculty in 1966.

While at UF, Small was one of the founding members of Physicians for Social Responsibility, which he says built on an inherent social passion that has come full circle with his work at the foundation.

Small, the foundation's senior program officer for tuberculosis, helps the foundation uncover what research could be the most beneficial in the fight against TB. It's sort of like being a venture capitalist, he says.

"Except the returns we're expecting on our investment is lives saved, not dollars," he said. "While many people think of TB as a disease of antiquity, the reality is it's one of the biggest health problems the world is facing, killing someone every 16 seconds."



Dr. Alma Littles (top left) pursued her mission of improving rural medicine after leaving the College of Medicine. Dr. Mark S. Gold (top right) made his mark in addiction medicine, while Dr. Peter Small (shown with mother and father, UF Professor Emeritus Parker Small Jr.) helps determine how millions are invested in tuberculosis research at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Alma Littles, M.D., 1986

Alma Littles left her hometown of Quincy, Fla., with a mission – to bring health care to people in the small, rural town, where doctor visits were few and far between.

Several members of her family, including her father, had died prematurely from illnesses that could have been prevented. Littles, who became interested in medicine after a teacher suggested it when she was in second grade, decided then her goal would be to prevent this from happening to other people.

“The resources just were not there,” said Littles, now an associate dean of academic affairs at the Florida State University College of Medicine. “I felt someone should be looking out for people there. That’s where my passion came

Mark S. Gold, M.D., 1975

Addiction medicine didn’t exist when Mark S. Gold was a medical student at the UF College of Medicine.

But at the beginning of his career, after watching how drugs caused fellow students to self-destruct in college during the early 1970s, Gold recognized the importance of understanding how drugs of abuse affected the brain.

While a psychiatric resident at Yale Medical School, Gold pioneered the prominent theory that drugs target the brain and cause changes that lead to withdrawal when the drugs are stopped.

Gold also discovered that a drug used to treat high blood pressure stopped methadone withdrawal symptoms, making it easier for drug abusers to kick the habit.

More recently, Gold, a UF professor of addiction medicine, explained that exposure to exhaled anesthesia in hospitals could make some doctors more susceptible to drug abuse. He also found food addiction is similar to drug addiction.

But Gold also has spent much of his career on drug prevention and education. He’s written 26 books on drugs, worked with every presidential administration since Ronald Reagan, served on the federal Drug Czar’s kitchen cabinet, and continues to work with the state drug czar.

“Even though treatment is better than it was when I started in 1975, and stigma is less than it was, the only treatment that is 100 percent effective is prevention.”

Gold credits his success to UF neuroscience faculty members who encouraged him as a student. Gold still treasures the compliment Al Rhoton Jr., M.D., a professor and chairman emeritus of neurosurgery, gave him after Gold was honored with a spot on the College of Medicine’s Wall of Fame.

“He said I’ve had a career that was worth admiring,” Gold said. “That means a lot to a person like me who’s looked up to a person like him their whole adult life.”

from. My goal was to get as much knowledge as I could (at the UF College of Medicine) and bring it back to Quincy.”

And that’s what she did. After earning her medical degree at UF and completing her residency, Littles set up a practice in Quincy. Within three months, her waiting room was full.

Littles spread her mission further when she became the residency director at Tallahassee Memorial and, in 2002, a faculty member at FSU. Teaching allows her to recruit more young doctors into rural medicine, she said.

“If you haven’t been there it’s easy to assume it doesn’t exist,” she said. “Having access to someone who’s been on both sides is a great influence.”

College of Nursing

Linda H. Aiken, Ph.D., M.N., 1966; B.S.N., 1964

Linda Aiken is director of the Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Research and the Claire M. Fagin leadership professor of nursing and professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. She has built a long and distinguished research career with the agenda of improving health-care outcomes by building an evidence base for health services management and providing direction for national policymakers.

She recently served as a keynote speaker for the College of Nursing's Dorothy M. Smith Nursing Leadership Conference. Aiken was closely mentored by Founding Dean Dorothy Smith as a student and has supported recent College initiatives to honor Dean Smith.

"Dorothy Smith instilled in her students the centrality of systematic surveillance and documentation of nursing care and its outcomes in the professional nurse," Aiken said. "[Dean] Smith's vision of nursing reshaped nursing education and practice worldwide."

Research conducted by Aiken showed that more nurses at the bedside could save thousands of patient lives each year. Her 2002 study results found that patients who have common surgeries in hospitals with low nurse-to-patient ratios have up to a 31 percent increased chance of mortality. A 2003 study found that patients experience significantly lower mortality and failure-to-rescue rates in hospitals where more baccalaureate-prepared nurses provide direct patient care.

Prior to joining the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania in 1988, Aiken was vice president of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. She recently was ranked 10th on Modern Healthcare's list of the 100 Most Powerful People in Healthcare. She was a member of President Clinton's National Health Reform Task Force and served on the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organization's Nurse Staffing Roundtable that produced the frequently cited white paper on the nurse staffing shortage. Aiken has received honorary doctoral degrees from Emory University, Georgetown University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Jo Snider, Ed.D., 1976; M.N., 1965

Jo Snider, an associate professor of psychiatric-mental health nursing in the department of health care environments and systems, has made her mark as a UF College of Nursing faculty member since her start in 1965.

Snider was in the first class of master's students at the College of Nursing and was recruited to be a faculty member after graduation. She liked the close-knit environment of the college and felt she was treated, for the first time in her educational career, as though she had something to offer. She also admired the philosophy of the faculty who felt that "there was a sense of responsibility for all faculty to contribute to the profession," she said.

After 30 years of teaching at the college, Jo Snider's e-mail inbox often contains messages from former students, some of whom graduated more than 20 years ago. They seek advice, references or just someone to listen to their problems. Through serving in a number of different positions, including director of BSN Senior Studies for 17 years and adviser to the Honors program, a position she still holds, Snider has had an undeniable influence on many students she has taught.

She also currently teaches psychiatric-mental health nursing and nursing ethics and serves as chair for doctoral dissertation and master's project committees.

"I believe Dean Smith would be very pleased with the college today, especially its dual emphasis on practice and research as a foundation for education," Snider said.

College of Veterinary Medicine

Carlos Risco, D.V.M., 1980

Carlos Risco realized the importance of veterinary medicine at a young age. His father, a physician, raised Brown Swiss cattle and canaries on a small farm in Ohio, and he always took the advice of veterinarians seriously.

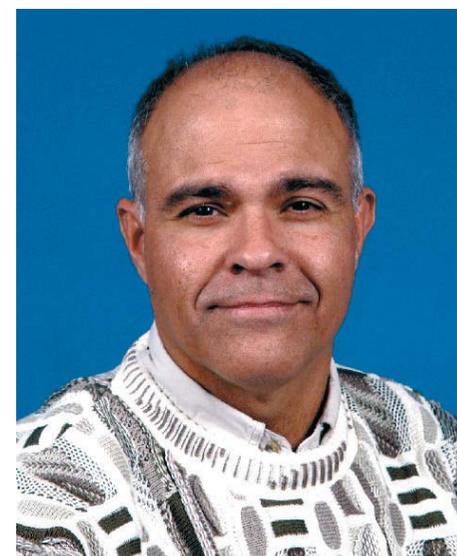
So perhaps it was not too much of a surprise when Risco himself grew interested in veterinary medicine, specifically dairy cows.

Risco, a member of the UF College of Veterinary Medicine's charter class of 1980, is a board-certified animal reproduction specialist and a professor in the college's department of large animal clinical sciences.

Although living and working on a farm was one early influence on Risco, James Himes, emeritus associate dean of students and instruction at the college, was another.

"Dr. Himes' enthusiasm was simply contagious," Risco said. "After attending his lectures, I couldn't wait to learn more."

A native of Cuba, Risco is an internationally recognized lecturer on dairy cattle, and in 2005, he received the Florida Blue Key Distinguished Faculty award. That same year, he received the college Alumni Council's Distinguished Alumni Award and was chosen by UF veterinary students to receive the college's Carl Norden Award for Distinguished Teaching. In 2004, Risco completed a three-month Fulbright Fellowship to further his research into postpartum problems of dairy cows in Argentina.



Linda Aiken, top, Jo Snider, middle, and Carlos Risco are representative of the many successful alumni of the HSC.

College of Pharmacy

Noriega family

When you enter Bill's Prescription Center in Brandon, it's hard to believe the words "Est. 1956" embossed into the threshold as you enter this modern pharmacy bustling with pharmacists, technicians and clerks. It's not unlike the Walgreen's across the street, except that it's more like walking into a family reunion.

Justo "Bill" Noriega worked hard to open his own pharmacy after he graduated from the College of Pharmacy in 1954. As his business grew, so did his family of pharmacists. In 1965, his sister, Melecia Noriega, graduated as a pharmacist from UF. In 1981, son John Noriega, and in 1990, daughter Mary Noriega Denham, also graduated as pharmacists from UF.

The Noriegas have built their community pharmacy practice on patient care from the first year, when Brandon had only 1,800 residents and two doctors. With a population of 200,000 today, their patient-care philosophy has not changed. John, who grew up in his father's store, now manages the business. Sharing his father's commitment, his focus is on patient care, giving service and being the best pharmacy, not only in Brandon, but in the world.

Building the best pharmacy isn't the end of the road for John, it's just the beginning. When asked about his vision for the future, he says he hopes to see community pharmacy practice grow throughout the United States. John has contributed \$100,000 to his family's alma mater in support of his belief in pharmacy education and to help establish the UF Institute for Pharmacy Entrepreneurs.



The Noriega family, all UF College of Pharmacy alumni, stand in front of their pharmacy in Brandon. They are, from left, Mary Noriega Denham, Bill Noriega, Melecia Noriega and John Noriega.



Kay Walker

College of Public Health and Health Professions

Kay Walker, B.S., 1964; M.Ed., Ph.D., 1990

On her first day as a UF instructor, Kay Walker, Ph.D., prayed that the students wouldn't hear her knees knocking.

"I was scared to death," Walker recalled. "I had agreed to teach, thinking I would only do it for one semester ... I never thought I would be a lifer!"

Walker, who retired in 2004 after 32 years as a professor of occupational therapy and 16 years as a department chair for the College of Public Health and Health Professions, said she has Alice Jantzen, Ph.D., founding chair of UF's occupational therapy program, to thank for pushing her in the right direction.

"She urged me to go to graduate school after receiving my bachelor's degree from the UF program in 1964, and then she asked me to teach," Walker said.

It wasn't long before Walker was hooked on teaching.

Still, the years she served were not without challenges. She was named department chair in 1984, and as one of very few female department chairs at the university, Walker took on the issue of equal recognition and compensation for female faculty members.

During her 16 years as department chair, Walker expanded educational programs in the college. She developed one of the first master's programs in the country for people with a bachelor's in non-occupational therapy fields and saw her dream of a doctoral program realized with the college's rehabilitation science degree.

"I feel fortunate to have landed in academia as a career and to have been at UF with its excellent faculty, students and administrators," she said. **P**

UF scientists trace origin of shark's electric sense

By John Pastor

Sharks are known for their almost uncanny ability to detect electrical signals while hunting and navigating.

Now researchers have traced the origin of those electrosensory powers to the same type of embryonic cells that gives rise to many head and facial features in humans.

The discovery, reported by UF scientists in the February edition of *Evolution & Development*, identifies neural crest cells, which are common in vertebrate development, as a source of sharks' electrical ESP.

It also fortifies the idea that before our early ancestors emerged from the sea, they too had the ability to detect electric fields.

"Sharks have a network of electrosensory cells that allows them to hunt by

"If you think of this in the big picture of evolution of sensory systems, such as olfaction, hearing, vision and touch, this shows sharks took a pre-existing genetic program and used it to build yet another type of sensory system."

— Martin Cohn, Ph.D.

detecting electrical signals generated by prey," said Martin Cohn, Ph.D., a developmental biologist with the departments of zoology and anatomy and cell biology and the UF Genetics Institute. "That doesn't mean they can only detect electric fish. They can sense electricity generated by a muscle twitch, even if it's the weak signal of a flounder buried under sand."

Likewise, sharks are widely thought to use the Earth's magnetic field for navigation, enabling them to swim in precise paths across large expanses of featureless ocean, Cohn said.

"If you think of this in the big picture of evolution of sensory systems, such as olfaction, hearing, vision and touch, this shows sharks took a pre-existing genetic program and used it to build yet another type of sensory system," Cohn said.

UF and University of Louisiana researchers analyzed electroreceptor development in the embryos of the lesser spotted catshark, an animal that is largely motionless during the day and hunts at night, mainly in the seagrass beds of the eastern Atlantic Ocean.

Using molecular tests, scientists found two independent genetic markers of neural crest cells in the animal's electricity-sensing organs. Analysis shows these cells migrate from the brain and travel into the developing shark's head, creating the framework for the electrosensory system — a previously unknown function of a much-studied group of cells, according to Renata Freitas, a doctoral candidate in the zoology department and first author of the paper.

The process mirrors the development of the lateral line that allows fish to



PHOTO COURTESY OF RENATA FREITAS

The dark markings indicate gene expression in the electrosensory organs in the head of an embryonic shark. University of Florida Genetics Institute scientists traced the origin of a shark's electrosensory powers to the same type of embryonic cells that gives rise to many head and facial features in humans.

mechanically sense their environment, and organs of the inner ear that enable people to keep their balance. But scientists suspect as human ancestors emerged from the sea, they discarded their lateral lines as well as their ability to sense electrical fields.

"Our fishy ancestors had the anatomy for it," said James Albert, Ph.D., a former UF biologist who is now at the University of Louisiana. "You can imagine how valuable this system would be if you were aquatic, because water is so conductive. But it doesn't work on land — air doesn't conduct electricity as well. When it happens, it's called a lightning bolt and you don't need special receptors to sense it."

All primitive animals with backbones could sense electricity, according to Michael Coates, an associate professor of organismal biology and anatomy at the University of Chicago. Mammals, reptiles and birds lost the sense over time, as did most fish alive today.

But in sharks and a few other species, such as sturgeons and lampreys, electrosensory capability endured.

"Most fish you see today have large eyes," Coates said. "But sharks are predators that do not particularly rely on vision. Knowing that the electrosensory system may have developed with involvement of neural crest cells is valuable for people trying to reconstruct vertebrate evolution. It gives us further indication of how all of the various sensory systems come on line." **P**

Molecular force field helps cancer cells defend against attack

By Melanie Fridl Ross

Much as the famed starship Enterprise would deploy a deflector shield to evade enemy attack, tumor cells are capable of switching on a molecular force field of their own to fend off treatments aimed at killing them. Now University of Florida researchers have found a chink in their armor.

The cells churn out an enzyme that bonds with a protein, creating a protective barrier that deflects damage from radiation or chemotherapy and promotes tumor cell survival. But in laboratory experiments, UF scientists were able to block the union, and the malignant cells died. The findings are opening new avenues of research that could lead to improved cancer therapies, the researchers report in *Cancer Research*.

“We have found a gene called focal adhesion kinase which is produced at very high levels in human tumors, and our work has shown this makes the tumors more likely to survive as they spread throughout the body and grow,” said William G. Cance, M.D., a researcher at the University of Florida Shands Cancer Center and chairman of the department of surgery at UF’s College of Medicine. “It also makes them more resistant to our attempts to kill them. And we’re trying to understand exactly why this gene, which is a small enzyme molecule, is

very intimately associated with tumor cell survival.”

Focal adhesion kinase, or FAK, has spawned a flurry of research designed to develop new medicines to prevent it from linking with the protein known as vascular endothelial growth factor receptor 3, or VEGFR-3. The protein is tied to the growth of channels in the lymph system that serve as cellular superhighways for cancer spread and is found in breast, colon and thyroid tumors.

Cance and colleagues were the first to pull FAK out of human tumors and to show that human cancers make the molecule in large quantities. In 1996, the team went on to show that tumors prevented from producing the enzyme die. The scientists also have identified some protein receptors FAK binds to; VEGFR-3 is the latest they’ve discovered.

Breast cancers that pump out high volumes of FAK and VEGFR-3 are more aggressive, Cance said. The scientists were able to block FAK from binding with VEGFR-3 in cultures of human breast cancer cells by introducing a different protein that stopped cancer cells from dividing and caused them to die but spared normal breast cells.

UF surgical resident Christopher Garces, M.D., and UF research assistant professors Elena

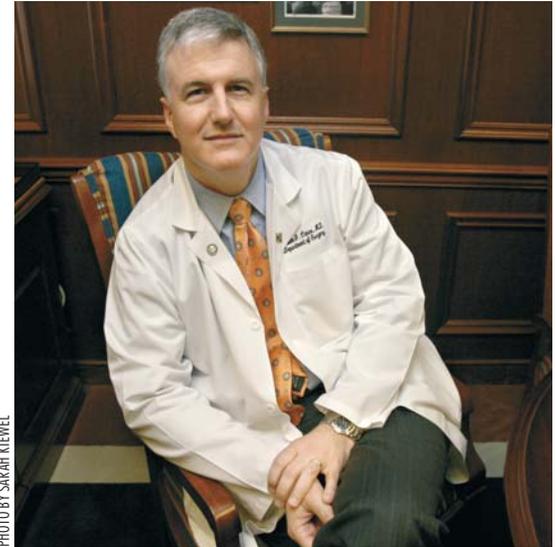


PHOTO BY SARAH KIEWEL

Dr. William Cance and colleagues have found a way to kill cancer cells in the laboratory by blocking the ability of a gene to bind with a protein.

Kurenova, Ph.D., and Vita Golubovskaya, Ph.D., also were involved in the work, funded by the National Cancer Institute. **P**

New Gastrointestinal Oncology Center opens

By Melanie Fridl Ross

The UF Shands Cancer Center has opened the Gastrointestinal Oncology Center as part of its ongoing commitment to patient-focused, multidisciplinary clinical care.

Nurse coordinator Coleen Booker, R.N., is working with cancer services business representative Laura Buono to help patients and referring physicians efficiently access the adult gastrointestinal oncology services they need. They also act as liaisons between patients, referring physicians and the Cancer Center’s GI oncology team of physicians and staff. The program’s medical leader is surgeon Steven Hochwald, M.D.

“With so many facets of treatment, GI oncology patients will truly benefit from having a designated advocate to facilitate and ease their transition between procedures, clinics, doctors and staff,” said W. Stratford May Jr., M.D., Ph.D., Cancer Center director. “Reducing the high-anxiety time period for patients is one of our primary goals, and dedicating two individuals to manage the cumbersome task of scheduling tests, labs, surgical procedures, consults and financial counseling across multiple disciplines as well as psychosocial support will expedite the individual’s treatment.”

The team also will work in concert with the Cancer Center’s clinical trials office to provide patients with information about relevant clinical trials.

Each year the UF Shands Cancer Center’s multidisciplinary GI team of surgical, radiation and medical oncologists, pathologists, gastroenterologists, radiologists, nurse practitioners, nutritionists and social workers treats more than 500 patients who have complex gastrointestinal malignancies.

“I especially like the idea of being an advocate, and ensuring that our patients



Steven Hochwald



Coleen Booker

receive the best care possible in a smooth, caring and efficient manner,” said Booker, who previously worked as a nurse in the Shands at UF emergency department, where she spent the last six years as the core charge nurse for the day shift.

For more information, call the GI Oncology Center at 265-0990 or e-mail bookec@shands.ufl.edu or buonol@shands.ufl.edu. **P**



A Pathogenetic Port of Call

State's vulnerability to bio-threats prompts UF research initiative

By Christopher Hiatt

Each month, thousands of vacationers flock to Florida's coastline to soak up the sun and experience the thrill of the state's attractions. But souvenirs and sunburns might not be the only gifts they take home.

Take Norwalk virus, for example. Common on cruise ships, Norwalk causes diarrhea, vomiting and nausea, and is spread through contaminated water, food and personal contact. Because the virus is also resistant to chlorine, a dip in the pool could infect unsuspecting swimmers. A sea-weary traveler, unaware of contagion, could check into a Florida hotel and unpack more than just his or her luggage.

Florida is a potential port of call for a host of infectious diseases. The state's varied ecosystems and broad borders make it vulnerable to a number of emerging pathogens that could thrive in its subtropical climate. Floridians' active, outdoor lifestyle puts them at risk for mosquito-borne viruses like West Nile. Hurricanes skirting Latin America and the Caribbean islands could spread pathogens like malaria and yellow fever to the Sunshine State's shores. Some say it's only a matter of time before bird flu comes calling.

And it's not just people the pathogens plague. Diseases like citrus canker and citrus greening threaten Florida's fruit crops, while soybean rust, sudden oak death and Pierce's disease of grapes endanger other plant species. Diseases of food animals like foot-and-mouth also pose serious risks. A large-scale outbreak has in the past and could in the future prove catastrophic to Florida's multimillion-dollar agricultural industry, crippling the state's economy.

"We have so many agents out there – viruses, fungi, bacteria – that can impact this state that there needs to be a more concerted effort to be able to respond, to identify through accurate diagnosis and treat or eradicate," said C. Craig Tisher, M.D., dean of the College of Medicine.

Enter the Emerging Pathogens Initiative. The multidisciplinary endeavor is in its formative stages and is uniting researchers across campus, all intent on one

goal: combating the threat of dozens of agents that affect plants, animals and people in the state of Florida and the United States. Together they plan to create the Emerging Pathogens Institute, one of the first major academic institutes in the world to unite traditional and nontraditional scientific disciplines devoted to studying how these pathogens affect human health and influence the economy.

The initiative's objectives are threefold: first, to research and control the threat of infectious disease in Florida; second, to train the next generation of scientists to keep these threats at bay in the future; and third, to provide Florida residents with relevant, accurate information and teach them how they can help control disease.

Representatives from IFAS and the colleges of Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Engineering and Liberal Arts and Sciences are laying a foundation for the institute through the Emerging Pathogens Initiative. State legislators will review budget requests from several of the colleges during their next session. Requests for operational funding could generate about \$7 million, with a separate building planning request of \$8 million. The project is No. 4 on the Florida Public Education Capital Outlay, a list used to prioritize projects before the Legislature.

The institute will also be a candidate for funding from the National Institutes of Health.

It is too early to tell which specific diseases they will focus on, but the collaboration of so many talented individuals under the direction of skilled leadership promises to produce a wealth of innovation, researchers said.

"UF is the natural home to such an institute because of its enormous diversity of research, scholarly and clinical endeavors," said UF President Bernie Machen.

The institute has the potential to foster economic development as well. Grant McFadden, Ph.D., a molecular virologist relocating from the University of Western Ontario to direct the institute, said he believes in education as an incubator for economic development. Private-sector spin-offs of research



Richard Moyer



Grant McFadden

conducted in the lab could strengthen Florida's economy and generate jobs in the Gainesville area.

"EPI has the opportunity to bring together scientific talent currently at the University of Florida and combine their strengths with those of newly recruited experts in the area of microbial pathogens to form a critical mass of researchers," McFadden said. "The potential is simply enormous."

THE TALENTED CREW

The scientist driving the Emerging Pathogens Initiative is Richard W. Moyer, Ph.D. His research focuses on the pathogenesis of orthopoxviruses, which infect humans and animals and include viruses like smallpox and monkeypox.

Monkeypoxvirus was imported from Africa. In 2003 the first infected humans in the United States surfaced. Symptoms include fever, headaches and a characteristic rash.

Both smallpox and monkeypox can be deadly to humans; smallpox was the scourge of humanity until World Health Organization efforts eradicated it in 1976. Although monkeypox is rare and treatable, it is one of several poxviruses that can infect humans as well as animals. Study of this virus is one of the initiative's priorities.

Moyer's vision for the UF-based institute grew out of his research on pathogens affecting humans and his experience as co-director of the Southeast Regional Center of Excellence for Biodefense and Emerging Infections. SERCEB, a cooperative effort involving six institutions throughout the Southeast, is designed to foster research necessary to protect society from emerging infections and biologic threats.

"SERCEB was the catalyst," he said. "This gets us a real seat at the table."

In five years, Moyer foresees the Emerging Pathogens Institute at UF combining a variety of relevant sciences, including engineering, the agricultural sciences, computer science, ecology, sociology, meteorology, chemistry, communications and the more traditional microbiological sciences, all in one building.

"Uniting and fusing all the resources which are available on our campus will create a program capable of innovative and novel research," he said.

Moyer points to the wealth of resources UF experts can contribute to an initiative of this scope. Here are just a few examples:

- UF chemists Weihong Tan, Ph.D., and Charles R. Martin, Ph.D., are using nanotechnology to develop advanced methods for the detection of pathogenic organisms. The research, said David E. Richardson, Ph.D., a professor and chair of chemistry, could ultimately lead to the development of therapeutic approaches to killing such organisms.

- Eric W. Triplett, Ph.D., a professor and chair of microbiology and cell science in IFAS, studies brucella. This bacterium causes brucellosis, an ailment with symptoms similar to those of the flu. Brucellosis is found in cows and sheep, and while it is not common in the United States, it can also spread to humans. There is no vaccine available. IFAS scientists are also interested in plant pathogens, particularly in citrus greening, a devastating organism first discovered in Florida in August.

- IFAS' Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory in Vero Beach is one of the largest of its kind in the country. The lab studies mosquitoes, which thrive in Florida's climate and can spread infectious disease.

McFadden, the institute's newly recruited director, will bring all of this talent together. He researches how viruses interact with their hosts, neutralizing the antiviral effects of the immune system. When viruses infect a host, they produce compounds that inhibit the immune system. Many of these compounds, when cloned and examined free from their pathogenic origin, have tremendous therapeutic potential. Like Moyer, McFadden's lab studies how poxviruses cause disease and why they leap species unexpectedly.

"I'm very interested in that tug of war between the pathogen and the host," McFadden said.

McFadden is also the chief scientific officer and co-scientific founder of VIRON Therapeutics Inc., a drug discovery and development company that arose out of his research in virus-host interactions. McFadden and co-founder Alexandra Lucas, M.D., hope to bring a branch of VIRON to Gainesville.

Through the new initiative, researchers from different scientific specialties hope to answer questions more effectively than they could individually.

"Since we don't read each other's literature, if we work together we could have synergy like nowhere else in the world," Triplett said.

The initiative's arsenal of thinkers is prepared to take a step toward more cooperation.

"The way we are going to compete is by developing integrated and innovative approaches to solving problems," the department of chemistry's Richardson said. "UF is an organization that can do that – that was Moyer's vision."

FULL SPEED AHEAD

Until the initiative gains institute status, Moyer said participants will continue to develop a local support system. This fall, the emphasis will shift to recruitment of new researchers. Moyer and McFadden expect to hire three top scientists in fields relating to human pathogenic disease by spring 2007.

Finding a permanent home for the institute on campus could take a little longer. The College of Medicine has allotted 20,000 square feet in the Academic Research Building for now, space being vacated by researchers relocating to the Cancer – Genetics Building.

Moyer's dream of a building that serves as a nucleus for the institute will come later. Winfred M. Phillips, D.Sc., vice president for research, said the \$8 million requested of the state Legislature would lay the groundwork for a facility that could cost 10 times that amount.

"We are always pleased to see new and timely initiatives by faculty at the University of Florida that will bring it to the forefront of research," Phillips said. "I believe this is one of them." 

Christopher Hiatt is a communications intern with HSC News and Communications.

Doctors help dog survive run-in with kabob

By Sarah Carey

When veterinarians and cardiologists from the University of Florida said “Yankee, go home,” they did so with pride and a sense of heartfelt joint ownership. Yankee, a tail-wagging, 7-year-old yellow Labrador retriever, went home from UF’s Veterinary Medical Center Feb. 3 with her actual owners, the Stazzone family of Satellite Beach, after successful open heart surgery to remove a bamboo barbecue skewer from her heart.

In a collaborative procedure involving UF

surgeon on the case.

“We had very little time to coordinate this thing, and the team worked out really great,” said Gary Ellison, D.V.M., a professor of small animal surgery at UF who assisted in the procedure. “While we provided the critical care before and after Yankee’s surgery, we don’t have the capability of doing bypass at our veterinary hospital and we needed the human surgeon’s expertise.”

Only two veterinary institutions in the country

Bleiweis added that although Yankee had a severe heart infection, she responded to the procedure “better than most people do.”

“We were able to get her off the ventilator and out of the operating room without a problem and she was standing on all fours that same day,” he said. “It was amazing.”

Yankee’s woes actually began on Halloween, when the Stazzones had steak kabobs for dinner and Yankee grabbed one, “practically inhaling the whole thing,” Mary Stazzone said. “Immediately she was sick and throwing up, and everything I cleaned up was steak, but no stick.”

After initial surgery to remove the skewer from her stomach, Yankee seemed to have recovered. But two months later her condition rapidly deteriorated and it initially appeared to be unrelated to her previous illness.

When Yankee was admitted to the VMC a few days prior to surgery, her blood was not clotting and she was anemic, said Nikki Hackendahl, D.V.M., the small animal internal medicine resident who had primary responsibility for Yankee. Then Hackendahl detected a heart murmur and immediately requested a consultation from veterinary cardiologist Amara Estrada, D.V.M.

“We did an echocardiogram and noticed a strange linear structure in the heart,” Estrada said. “Then we found out the dog had a history of eating a bamboo skewer and surgery had been performed to remove part of it from the dog’s stomach.”

Because of the close relationship Estrada and the veterinary cardiology group have with the human pediatric cardiology team — the two groups round together on Wednesdays — Estrada shared images from Yankee’s echocardiogram and asked her human counterparts’ opinion.

“We were going to do inflow occlusion, a procedure that prohibits blood flow but gives you only two to four minutes to open up the heart and look inside,” Estrada said. “They said this wasn’t such a great idea due to the short time frame and the limited access. I asked them for help and they readily accepted and offered to assist us with the case.”

Although Yankee developed a systemic infection that will continue to be treated with antibiotics, she’s alive and improving every day, clinicians said. Her owners said their three daughters had been making cards for Yankee and couldn’t wait to have her home.

“I bought Yankee for my husband when we were just dating and we’ve had her for seven years,” Mary Stazzone said. “It was just such a shock how this has all happened.” **P**

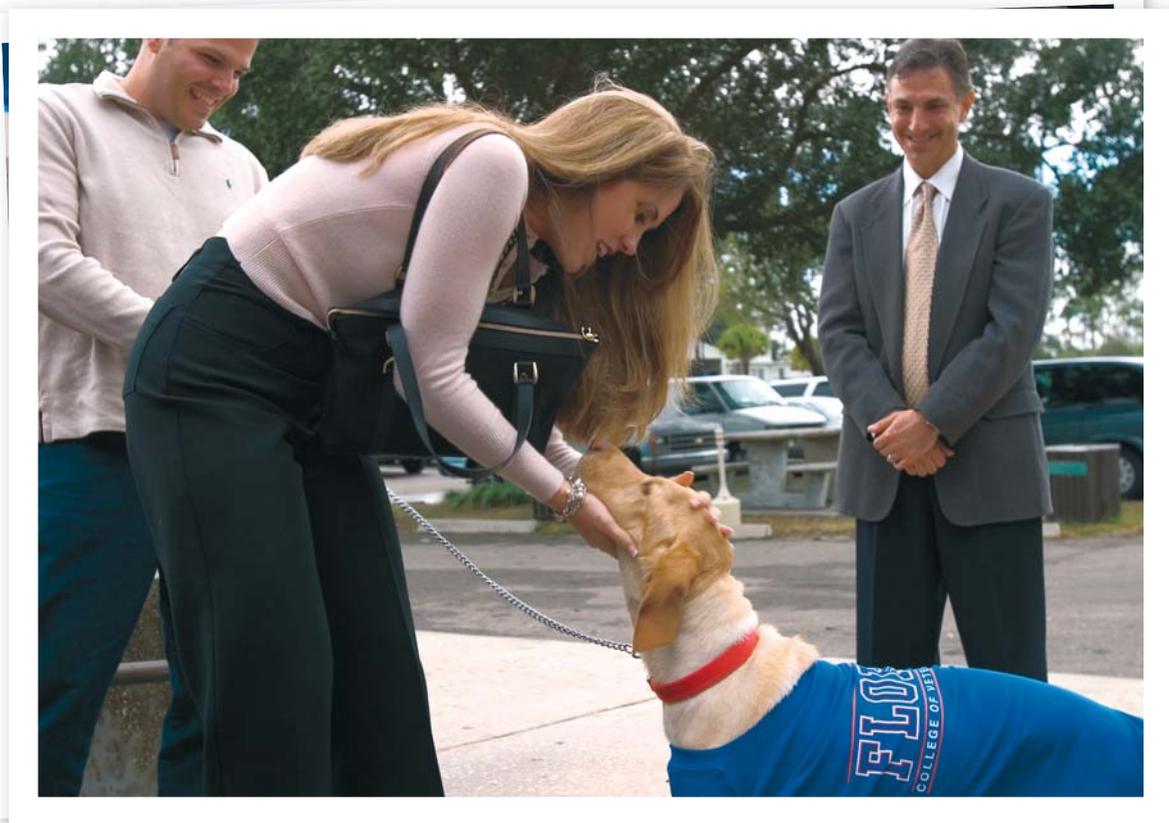


PHOTO BY SARAH KEWEL

Yankee greets her owners, Vincent and Mary Stazzone, Feb. 3 as they arrive to take her home from UF’s Veterinary Medical Center. Pediatric cardiothoracic surgeon Mark Bleiweis, M.D., right, was the lead surgeon for the operation to remove a shish-kabob skewer from the dog’s heart.

veterinarians and physicians from the Congenital Heart Center at UF, Yankee was placed on bypass for 55 minutes Jan. 27 at a surgical research facility located near the MRI unit that was used to pinpoint the skewer’s location. The skewer had perforated the dog’s stomach and pierced the heart after she ate a steak kabob.

The entire operation lasted about three hours, and pediatric cardiothoracic surgeon Mark Bleiweis, M.D., the center’s director, was lead

perform heart bypass procedures in dogs and those are located in Texas and Colorado, Ellison said, adding that Yankee’s condition would have made transport to any other facility extremely risky.

Once the skewer was removed, Bleiweis rebuilt a damaged heart valve.

“I’m really proud of what we did, and that we were able to put this many people from so many specialties together to save this dog’s life,” Bleiweis said. “I’m an animal owner and this is someone’s family member.”

Devoted patients follow doctor to UF

By April Frawley Birdwell

A boy once lived to be 18. That was the only hope doctors could give Kathy Dahlberg when her twin sons were diagnosed with glycogen storage disease, a rare condition that keeps the body from being able to store glucose and maintain necessary blood sugar levels. They said her infant sons probably would not live to graduate high school. They would never grow up.

Three years later, she attended a conference to meet other parents coping with the disease. Instead, she met someone who would change her children's lives. A speaker at the conference, David Weinstein, M.D., gave the Minnesota mom shocking news after examining the twins, who at 3 were taking 39 pills a day: Weinstein thought the boys could be healthy.

Two months later Dahlberg and her children were on a plane to Boston, where Weinstein was a faculty member at Harvard Medical School's pediatric teaching hospital, Children's Hospital Boston. He revised their treatment and by the time the family was back home, Dahlberg was noticing something strange – her boys were playing and full of energy, like other 3-year-olds.

In August, Weinstein moved his entire clinical practice and research program to the UF College of Medicine, making it the largest center in the world for glycogen storage disease. Dahlberg, along with all 150 other patients and all of the program's employees, followed.

"We're not just cases to him," Dahlberg said. "We're people to him. We all think we're his favorites. He's just the most exceptional doctor I've ever met."

As devoted as patients already are to the doctor, the decision to come to UF may make them even more grateful. The move has allowed Weinstein to collaborate with leading researchers in other specialties to search for a cure and better treatments for the disorder.

In the months since Weinstein joined UF, 23 researchers from different specialties have already formed seven teams to study different aspects of the disease. Teams are studying gene therapy, stem cell therapy, new treatments, the genetics of the disease and associated problems like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and anemia, which some patients have.

"The University of Florida believes in collaborations; people work together and there's a lot of excitement here," he said. "It was worth the move down to create a program where we have so much interest from so many people who are using their strengths to guide treatments for these conditions."

Only about one in 100,000 children are born each year with glycogen storage disease, which when not treated properly can result in retardation, seizures and other medical complications.

Weinstein had been exposed to glycogen storage disease throughout his training at Harvard. His mentor, John Crigler, M.D., discovered the only known treatment for the disease, cornstarch therapy. Prior to cornstarch therapy, most patients died from glycogen storage disease, Weinstein said.

"Cornstarch isn't very fancy, but it turned this into a manageable disease," he said. "This is a life-sustaining medication for our patients and they weigh it out to the gram."

But it wasn't until Weinstein started going to conferences and meeting families like the Dahlbergs who weren't getting the treatment they needed that he decided



PHOTO BY SARAH MEWEL

Avery Diamond, 9, has been seeing Dr. David Weinstein for two years. Diamond was one of 150 glycogen storage disease patients who followed Weinstein's program from Boston to UF.

to specialize in the disease.

"I realized most patients were not doing nearly as well as our patients were doing," he said. "This is a rare disease. Unfortunately there aren't many doctors who are trained in it. There were children who were having seizures and children who were dying. At that point, I decided somebody needed to be an advocate for these children."

Robert Diamond noticed a dramatic difference in his son Avery, 9, after they began seeing Weinstein two years ago. His growth rate improved, as did his muscle tone and the size of his abdomen.

The problem is doctors at other centers who don't see many patients with the disease often don't know how to manage cornstarch therapy. Because people with glycogen storage disease can't store glucose to maintain blood sugar levels between meals, they have to take precise doses of cornstarch at specific times.

"We started him young enough that cornstarch didn't taste horrible," Diamond said. "Avery likes it with pink lemonade."

"It's chunky," Avery added, shrugging.

The choice to stick with Weinstein was an easy one for Dahlberg. Weinstein's patients usually only have to see him once a year for an overnight checkup, and with Disney World and the beach nearby, the yearly trip is now fun too.

But more importantly, her twin sons Andrew and John, who are now 9, no longer take 39 pills a day or have to have continuous feedings through the night. Sometimes, she even forgets her children have the disease.

"I can't imagine where my kids would be if I had not met him," Dahlberg said. "It's one of the things I am most thankful for in my life." **P**

Filly has new lease on life thanks to rescuers and UF large animal surgeons

By Sarah Carey

A Thoroughbred filly named Squirt born “knock-kneed” – with deformed joints – faced euthanasia at the young age of 6 weeks but now runs and plays at her home farm like the healthy pet she is, thanks to the horse lovers who rescued her and to surgeons at the UF Veterinary Medical Center.

After a series of surgeries performed between May and August at UF, Squirt’s deformities appear to have been completely addressed, says her proud owner, Giovanna King, who lives in Live Oak.

“She is continuing to gain weight and grow muscle,” King said. “When I look at her now and compare pictures of her then and now, she just looks like an entirely different horse.”

King said she and her husband, Mike, unexpectedly gained possession of the filly in mid-May, when a friend called after visiting a breeding farm in Ocala.

“She said, ‘I’m going to be bringing you a baby,’” King recalled. “I said, ‘No way, I don’t want another horse.’” The Kings own Beaver Creek Farm and own several horses they have rescued over the years as well as other horses they breed and sell.

But King’s friend told her, “Don’t worry, you’ll want this one.”

King’s friend told her that the filly’s mother had been sold by the farm owner, but the buyers did not want the foal because of her limb deformities.

“She actually overheard the farm hands talking about taking this filly back behind the barn to shoot her,” King said.

After she heard the full story and saw the filly, King’s attitude changed.

“This filly’s knees were totally together and she was unable to run because she’d trip and fall,” King said.

A regular client of UF’s VMC, King knew right away the filly would require specialized treatment.

As it turned out, several surgeries were required to fully address the problems with Squirt’s legs. Troy Trumble served as the attending clinician during all of the procedures, supervising residents Nicholas Ernst, Aric Adams and Sarah Matyjaszek and walking them through each operation.

Squirt’s deformity was due to abnormalities surrounding her growth plate, Trumble said, and was treated surgically in two procedures, one on each leg.



The knock-kneed filly, Squirt, (left) before her life-saving treatments at the UF Veterinary Medical Center and after (right). Dr. Troy Trumble served as the attending clinician during all of the procedures.

The transformation in Squirt from the first visit to the last screw removal was very impressive, not just in how the legs corrected, but also in Squirt’s entire appearance and demeanor, the surgeon added.

“I can see what Giovanna sees in this filly, as she is a very curious and amiable horse,” Trumble said. “Each time I tried to examine her legs in the stall, she would just walk right up to me and she snuggles right up next to you. You can’t help but like her.”

“I could see Giovanna’s drive to make this baby right,” Trumble said. “I hope that Squirt and Giovanna have many long years together.”

King said Squirt was “growing like a weed” and picking up weight.

Despite all Squirt has been through, it hasn’t changed her attitude, King said.

“She’s with me and she’s not going anywhere,” King said. “All of us here, we’re so attached to her. She follows us around like a puppy.” **P**

Breast cancer awareness event attracts experts, public

By Patricia Bates McGhee

More than 200 experts in breast health attended the 11th Annual Multidisciplinary Symposium on Breast Disease, held Feb. 10-12 at the Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island.

Designed to provide breast health education to physicians and those involved in the study and management of breast cancer, the symposium attracts experts from all over the nation. And a free public forum and dinner, "What Everyone Should Know About Breast Cancer," held at the Omni Hotel in downtown Jacksonville the evening before the symposium's start, attracted interested members of the public from Savannah, Ga., to Palatka.

The forum is designed to help the public make educated and informed decisions about their breast health. "But it's much more than just how to detect the disease," says Shahla Masood, M.D., a professor and associate chair of the department of pathology at UF College of Medicine – Jacksonville, who along with Robert A. Smith, director of cancer screening for the American Cancer Society in Atlanta, moderated a panel of six experts. "We hope our multidisciplinary team of medical professionals can give people the overall knowledge to help them understand the disease, too," she explains.

The forum's question-and-answer session addressed topics such as knowing the risks of breast cancer, getting second opinions, having regular mammograms and giving self-examinations.

In addition to Masood and Smith, faculty panelists included Patrick Borgen, M.D., chief of breast service in the surgery department of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York; James Chingos, M.D., an associate professor and division chief of hematology/oncology in the department of medicine at UF-Jacksonville; Lawrence Solin, M.D., a professor of radiation oncology at the University of Pennsylvania, and David Dershaw, M.D., director of the breast imaging section at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. **P**



The panelists for the public forum that preceded the 11th Annual Multidisciplinary Symposium on Breast Disease included (from left) Dr. James Chingos, UF-Jacksonville; Dr. David Dershaw, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; Dr. Lawrence Solin, University of Pennsylvania; Dr. Shahla Masood, UF-Jacksonville; Dr. Patrick Borgen, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; and Robert Smith, American Cancer Society, Atlanta.

Campaign to educate the community on stroke

By Patricia Bates McGhee

Jacksonville is the ninth city in the country to participate in the "Know Stroke in the Community" national awareness program, and Scott Silliman, M.D., a UF-Jacksonville associate professor of neurology, serves as the initiative's local stroke expert.

Sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (specifically, the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, or NINDS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Know Stroke in the Community" is dedicated to raising awareness of the signs and symptoms of stroke among Americans, particularly for groups identified as having the highest risk for stroke — blacks, Hispanics and senior citizens.

NIH and CDC launched the grassroots stroke education program in 2004 in five pilot cities — Houston; Richmond, Va; Chicago, Birmingham, Ala.; and New Orleans. Jacksonville is one of five additional cities coming on board in 2005-06, along with Boston, St. Louis, Cleveland and Atlanta. NIH and CDC plan to expand the program in the future.

According to Margo Warren of NINDS, the educational campaign is being launched in cities

with a high rate of stroke, large black and Hispanic populations, and with medical centers dedicated to the treatment of stroke patients. Jacksonville has two designated stroke centers — Shands Jacksonville and St. Luke's Hospital.

To kick off the program in Jacksonville last month, more than 30 community leaders, health educators, senior care community managers, physicians and nurses — dubbed stroke champions — met on the UF&Shands Jacksonville campus to learn more about stroke and organize a plan to "get out the stroke message" citywide.

Silliman, who also directs the Comprehensive Stroke Program and Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Program at The Neuroscience Institute at Shands Jacksonville, explained the different types of strokes, their symptoms and treatments, underscoring the need for people to seek help immediately.

"The southeastern United States, including North Florida, is part of a 'stroke belt,'" he said. "It's not clear why, but Florida is hit hard by stroke." Silliman said it's also unknown why some minority groups are at higher risk for stroke. "Our



Scott Silliman

goal is to save lives by educating Jacksonville-area residents so they can identify the symptoms of stroke and know to seek help immediately." **P**

Craniofacial Center film to offer parents an 'emotional roadmap'

By Lindy McCollum-Brounley

The families of one of every 700 children born in the United States face the challenge of coping with their newborn's cleft lip and/or palate. It can be a distressing experience as parents are confronted with problems with breastfeeding, worry for the child's future and feelings of guilt — that maybe the parents are the cause of the deformity.

Fortunately for many, cleft lip can be diagnosed using ultrasound before birth, allowing parents to make necessary medical arrangements and to prepare



PHOTO BY LINDY MCCOLLUM-BROUNLEY

Creating a documentary on dealing with cleft lip/cleft palate, Tim Nackashi focuses his lens on the work of the doctor and pediatric dental assistant as the patient's mother looks on. Nackashi's brother, Bryan Nackashi, serves as sound boom operator during taping.

themselves emotionally for the birth of their baby. Even when an ultrasound exam doesn't reveal the anomaly, parents of children born with cleft lip and/or palate can quickly place a healthy perspective on their baby's deformity when they know what to expect next.

"Parents often are overwhelmed when they first learn of their child's cleft lip and/or palate," said William Williams, Ph.D., a professor and director of the UF Craniofacial Center. "The value of introducing these new parents to other parents who have gone through the process is remarkable."

The UF Craniofacial Center, under contract with the Department of Health's Children's Medical Services, has developed the statewide Cleft Lip and Craniofacial Network. Network coordinators counsel parents of babies with cleft lip and/or palate and provide specialized bottles and nipples to make nursing easier. More importantly, network coordinators introduce new parents of babies with cleft lip and/or palate to other parents who have already gone through the

repair process.

"It matters little that the physician tells the parent that cleft lip and/or palate is one of the most common birth defects worldwide," said Williams. "But when they meet the average mom and dad who have already gone through the process, you can hear an audible sigh of relief."

Williams noted that UF's Craniofacial Center is taking parental education a step further. The Center is developing a documentary film on the interdisciplinary approach used to correct cleft lip and palate and provide a broad range of services, including speech therapy, hearing assessment and psychological counseling for children and their families. The DVD will be available as an educational resource for parents distributed nationwide through the offices of craniofacial teams, pediatricians and obstetricians.

When searching for a talented documentarian to take on the project, Williams didn't have far to look. Tim Nackashi, 33, son of John Nackashi, a professor of medicine and chief of general pediatrics, won acclaim in 2004 for his and partner David Sampliner's award-winning production "Dirty Work," which was honored at the Sundance Film Festival and won Best Documentary Feature at the Atlanta Film Festival (www.dirtyworkdoc.com). Nackashi's documentary film experience combined with his sensitivity to his father's life's work made him a natural choice.

"Growing up, I saw a lot of my dad's work and connected with it," said Nackashi. "I had expressed interest in doing health-related pieces, and the craniofacial team expressed the need to create a piece that could be a great support tool for families who are in the early stages of receiving news that their child will have or was just born with a cleft lip and palate.

"The families, in many cases, aren't used to spending much time in a hospital or interacting very much with doctors, so there are a lot of questions that arrive around, 'What is my child going to look like,' 'What if I'm afraid of how my baby looks,' 'How will I feed my baby' and on and on," said Nackashi. "Obviously, the idea is to create a piece that can, in some way, address all of these issues."

Nackashi decided to share the real-life stories of patients and their families as they progress through the different stages of cleft lip and palate repair, from the early challenges of infancy to the end result of a happy and normal young adult. But he would delve into deeper territory than the cold, clinical timeline of surgeries, therapies and various other medical aspects of the process.

"I wanted to focus more on what to expect emotionally, and how to think about some of those things emotionally that are going to be happening with your baby as he or she goes through the process of rehabilitation," he said.

To do that, Nackashi interviewed the entire cleft palate team at UF-affiliated Wolfson Children's Hospital in Jacksonville and doctors, dentists and speech pathologists affiliated with the UF Craniofacial Center and Children's Medical Services in Gainesville.

More important to his "emotional roadmap" theme, Nackashi also interviewed and documented the experiences of several patients and their families during different stages of rehabilitation.

"I filmed and interviewed a great number of the craniofacial team members, and I'm very much aware that it's a strong collaborative process across disciplines," Nackashi said. "But this is still a piece that in the greater sense is about the resiliency of children. Children can overcome incredible odds and obstacles.

"With the right support, and if you'll just let them, they can actually lead you through the process," he said.

For more information about the Center, please visit www.cleft.ufl.edu. **P**

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

CHRIS E. FORSMARK, M.D., a professor and chief of the division of gastroenterology, hepatology, and nutrition, was elected president of the American Pancreatic Association in November 2005. He will serve a one-year term. The APA is the only professional society in the United States dedicated solely to study of diseases of the pancreas.



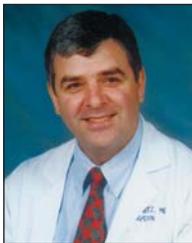
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BRUCE GOLDBERGER, Ph.D., director of the William R. Maples Center for Forensic Medicine, director of toxicology and professor of pathology, immunology and laboratory medicine, was named president of the American Academy of Forensic Science at the group's 58th annual meeting, held Feb. 20-25 in Seattle. The AAFS, a nonprofit professional society organized in 1948, is devoted to the improvement, administration and achievement of justice through the application of science to the process of law.



Goldberger

ANDREW KAUNITZ, M.D., an assistant department chair and professor of ob/gyn at the UF College of Medicine – Jacksonville, was recognized by Baptist Health South Florida for “teaching excellence in obstetrics and gynecology.” The group awarded him the Sanford H. Cole, M.D., Memorial Lectureship on Jan. 14 at the 20th Annual Sanford H. Cole, M.D. Memorial OB/GYN Symposium, held in Coral Gables.



Kaunitz

GEORGE WILSON, M.D., associate chair and an associate professor of community health and family medicine at the College of Medicine – Jacksonville, has been appointed to a two-year term on the American Academy of Family Physician's Commission on Finance and Insurance. AAFP, the largest medical specialty organization devoted solely to primary care, was the first medical organization to require its members to complete a minimum of 150 hours of accredited continuing medical education study every three years. The group represents more than 94,000 physicians and medical students nationwide.



Wilson

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Leading public health psychologist **BARBARA CURBOW**, Ph.D., has been named chair of the department of rehabilitation counseling in the College of Public Health and Health Professions.



Curbow

She succeeds former Chairman Horace Sawyer, Ed.D., who is retiring.

Curbow most recently served as an associate professor in the department of health, behavior and society at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

One of Curbow's first challenges in her UF post will be guiding the department through the transition to a new name and the addition of two areas of study. Pending approval from university administration, the department will take the name community and behavioral health sciences to reflect the addition of public health divisions in environmental health and social and behavioral sciences to the existing program in rehabilitation counseling.

“A goal of mine is to find a way to integrate the interests of the faculty and students so this is a single working group instead of three separate divisions,” Curbow said. “There are many ways in

which these disciplines can overlap.”

Curbow's research interests include risk communications, cancer prevention and control and occupational health psychology, with projects focusing on issues such as adolescent girls and smoking, mammography screening, quality of life issues for patients with cancer, and job-related stress.

Curbow ranks involvement in graduate education high on her list of achievements.

“I am proudest of the fact that I have mentored 25 doctoral students who are now scattered all over the country,” said Curbow, who has also served on 75 doctoral dissertation committees. “I take great personal satisfaction in having a hand in training them in the psychology of public health.”

EMILY KING, a graduate student in the department of clinical and health psychology, was selected as winner for the best student research paper in cognitive neuroscience by the American Psychology Association's Division of Clinical Neuropsychology.



King

King will receive \$500 and will present her paper at the association's annual conference this summer.

ELEANOR GREEN, D.V.M., chair of the department of large animal clinical sciences, and **DANA ZIMMEL**, D.V.M., an assistant professor of equine extension, have advanced in the leadership ranks of the Association of American Equine Practitioners.

Green, who also serves as chief of staff of UF's Large Animal Hospital, has been named the association's vice president. Zimmel has been named to the board of directors. The two officially began their new posts during the AAEP's annual convention, held Dec. 3-7 in Seattle.

As vice president, Green becomes the first female practitioner to serve on AAEP's executive committee and will become AAEP president in 2008. Board-certified by both the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine and the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, Green is a past president of the ABVP and also of the American Association of Veterinary Clinicians.

Zimmel serves as a clinical faculty member in the large animal medicine service in addition to her extension duties. She is dually board-certified by both the ACVIM and the ABVP. Zimmel currently is the faculty advisor for the AAEP student chapter at UF.

Headquartered in Lexington, Ky., the AAEP was founded in 1954 as a non-profit organization dedicated to the health and welfare of horses. The group has 8,500 members worldwide and is actively involved in ethics issues, practice management, research and continuing education in the equine veterinary profession and horse industry.



Green



Zimmel

Investigators to study cognitive effects of surgery in patients with Alzheimer's

By Jill Pease

Seniors who undergo major surgery are at risk for memory and thinking problems after surgery, and patients with Alzheimer's disease may be particularly vulnerable.

With support from a \$100,000 grant from the Alzheimer's Association, a UF research team will evaluate whether major surgery could increase cognitive decline in patients with Alzheimer's.

Previous research has shown that almost half of patients over the age of 65 who undergo non-cardiac surgery experience cognitive changes when they leave the hospital. And three months later, only 75 percent of them have completely regained their cognitive capacity.

Although theories abound, the cause of postoperative cognitive dysfunction is unknown, said principal investigator Catherine Price, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the College of Public Health and Health Professions' department of clinical and health psychology who has a joint appointment in anesthesiology.

But researchers are not sure how memory and thinking abilities are affected in people with Alzheimer's who have surgery.

"People with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of

dementia have not been included in these studies," Price said. "This raises the question: How might surgery affect their cognitive capabilities?"

Price and College of Medicine colleagues Peter Gearen, M.D., chairman of the department of orthopaedics and rehabilitation; Richard Vlasak, M.D., and Matthew Holsbeke, A.R.N.P., of orthopaedic surgery; and Victor Zhang, M.D., of anesthesiology, will evaluate 45 patients during the two-year study. The researchers will assess changes in cognitive function in 15 people with Alzheimer's disease who elect to have knee or hip replacement, 15 individuals who are free of dementia and having surgery, and 15 people with Alzheimer's who decide to postpone surgery.

At two weeks and three months after surgery, the scientists will use a protocol of neuropsychological tests to assess cognitive function. They will also measure levels of cortisol, a hormone that is released in times of stress.

"Our findings will help determine if people with Alzheimer's disease are particularly vulnerable to the effects of surgery, and if so, whether biological stress might be a mitigating factor," Price said. **P**



PHOTO BY LISA BALTOZER

Catherine Price

Stechmiller receives NIH funding to assess wound healing in diabetic ulcers

By Tracy Brown Wright

UF College of Nursing associate professor Joyce Stechmiller, Ph.D., A.R.N.P., has been awarded \$200,000 from the National Institutes of Health to lead a three-year research study to determine whether the antibiotic doxycycline can accelerate the healing of diabetic foot ulcers, reducing the number of amputations, decreasing costly interventions and ultimately improving the patients' quality of life.

Approximately 16 million people with diabetes reside in the United States. Of these, 15 percent will develop lower-extremity ulcers, and approximately 50,000 diabetic patients a year will undergo amputation because of ulcers.

In previous research, Stechmiller showed that fluids collected from chronic wounds contained high levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines — proteins that can stimulate or inhibit the growth and activity of various immune cells — and proteases, enzymes that aid in the breakdown of proteins in the body. However, fluids from a healing skin

wound contained low concentrations of cytokines and proteases.

In her current study, Stechmiller will seek to determine whether diabetic foot ulcers often fail to heal because persistently high levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines present in the wound induce high levels of proteases, which then destroy factors essential for wound healing. Researchers also will attempt to describe the molecular changes that occur in diabetic foot ulcers as they heal and to detect changes in the patterns of gene expression in healing diabetic wounds treated with topical doxycycline.

Stechmiller and her research team will monitor four groups for 20 weeks, taking measurements every two weeks. Group A will receive doxycycline and Group B will serve as a control group. Researchers will measure the wound surface, cytokines, proteases and growth factor activities of both groups at specified times throughout the 20 weeks. **P**



Joyce Stechmiller

Passion for medical education drives student

By April Frawley Birdwell

Baligh Yehia never hesitates to share his opinions on medical education, even when speaking to a roomful of leaders from some of the nation's largest hospitals and medical schools.

As the only student on the American Medical Association's Council on Medical Education, Yehia

"I'm surrounded by deans of medical schools and they really value the student perspective I bring to the council. It's a valuable voice I bring." — Baligh Yehia

speaks for every medical student in the country, and it's a job the University of Florida College of Medicine senior takes seriously.

"I'm surrounded by deans of medical schools and they really value the student perspective I bring to the council," Yehia said. "It's a valuable voice I bring."

At 24, Yehia is one of the youngest students in the College of Medicine's 2006 graduating class and one of the most active leaders on campus. Aside from his role with the AMA, Yehia is also chairman of the Florida Medical Association Medical Student Governing Council and co-president of the college's chapter of the Alpha Omega Alpha medical student honor society.

A Lebanese native who grew up in Coral Springs, Yehia was admitted to the College of Medicine through the Junior Honors Medical Program, which accepts just 12 promising students a year and allows them to begin their medical training while still technically undergraduates.

He joined the AMA when he was a freshman and immediately was excited to see the effect medical students could have. He liked the idea of being a driving force on issues related to health care in the government, not leaving these decisions to the sole discretion of lawmakers.

"If we want to create a better health system, it needs to come from the people who are involved," he said. "This is an avenue to do that."

He began serving on different AMA committees



Baligh Yehia, one of the youngest students in the College of Medicine's senior class, is an active leader on campus and the only student on the American Medical Association's Council on Medical Education.

and last year was chosen to be the sole student on the AMA Council for Medical Education. The group of leaders meets four times a year and deals with issues like continuing medical education, diversity and medical education debt.

But "organized medicine" isn't Yehia's only passion. He's been playing the French horn for 14 years and played in the UF Marching Band before starting medical school.

He played the trumpet first, but switched to the French horn when his middle school band director needed another person to play the instrument. He never switched back.

"The French horn kind of picked me," Yehia said.

Being part of the AMA has also given Yehia the opportunity to travel across the country. But the most exciting trip the 24-year-old has taken actually happened before he started medical school.

Yehia spent two months living in the bush of the

African nation Burkina Faso, with no electricity and no running water, as part of a mission trip in 2002. He and members of his group spent time building relationships with villagers and helping out with what they could, even setting up a basketball hoop. While he was there, Yehia also visited a local hospital for rounds.

Last year, Yehia was inducted into UF's Hall of Fame, one of the most prestigious honors awarded to UF students. And he was one of only 20 UF students recently included in "Who's Who in American Universities."

The senior, who hopes to pursue a career in oncology and clinical education, says he owes much of his success to his mentors.

"There are a lot of role models here who demonstrate what it is to be a good clinical educator," he said. "By helping students become doctors you can impact the lives of thousands of patients." **P**

UF neurologist tapped to lead national Parkinson's group

By John Pastor

One of the directors of the University of Florida Movement Disorders Center has been named the medical director of the National Parkinson Foundation.

Michael Okun, M.D., a neurologist in the UF College of Medicine, will represent the foundation in the medical and scientific communities and provide guidance regarding medical and scientific issues relating to Parkinson's disease, according to an announcement in February. The three-year appointment will not affect his position at UF.

"With the appointment of Dr. Okun, NPF has taken a huge step toward enhancing the amount and the level of service to the Parkinson community, including researchers and

clinicians, as well as persons with Parkinson's disease and their care partners," said foundation Chairman Paul Orefice in a printed release.

"A crucial factor in our success against Parkinson's disease will be our ability to pool worldwide resources for research, clinical care and outreach," Okun said. "We want to take advantage of all of our opportunities for synergy, partnership and collaboration, particularly within the 40-plus international centers of excellence funded by NPF. We would like to aid the Parkinson community in coming together to develop better symptomatic treatments, improve diagnosis in rural areas, deliver care to the underserved and to eradicate this disease through meaningful research."



Michael Okun

Okun is co-director of UF's Movement Disorders Center along with Kelly Foote, M.D., an assistant professor of neurosurgery, and Hubert Fernandez, M.D., a neurologist and director of clinical trials for movement disorders. Together, they answer questions from Parkinson patients and family members on a Web-based "ask the expert" forum sponsored by the foundation.

"Dr. Okun is absolutely dedicated to finding new treatments and a cure for Parkinson's disease," said Dennis Steindler, Ph.D., executive director of UF's McKnight Brain Institute. "He's a great movement disorders clinician and he works with a great team. His work with the National Parkinson Foundation has been extremely positive for the Movement Disorders Center, the McKnight Brain Institute and the University of Florida."

Founded in 1957 and headquartered in Miami, the National Parkinson Foundation was created to serve those affected by Parkinson's disease and to support research aimed at curing the disease.

"We at NPF know Dr. Okun well," said Nathan Slewett, NPF chairman emeritus. "We have funded Parkinson research that he is performing, and we have heard him speak on numerous occasions in various forums, always with great enthusiasm and a wealth of knowledge about the disease that we are all intent on eradicating." 



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