

USC RESEARCH NEWS: MARCH, 18- APRIL, 8 2005

March 18, 2005

CHLA Names Tissue Engineering Expert to Key Research Institute Post

Ivan Vesely, an expert in tissue engineering, has been named director of the Cardiovascular Research Program at The Saban Research Institute of Childrens Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA).

Vesely was a member of the medical staff at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation and co-director of the Applied Biomedical Engineering Doctorate Program at Cleveland State University prior to his appointment at CHLA and the Keck School of Medicine. With the appointment, Vesely also serves as professor of cardiothoracic surgery at the Keck School and as the H. Russell Smith Foundation Endowed Chair in Cardiothoracic Research at the institute.

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HSC Opens New Urgent-care Center with Extended Service Hours

Patients who have an urgent medical problem and need to see a USC doctor after clinic hours now have a new place to go: the Evaluation and Treatment Center, or ETC, in the Healthcare Consultation Center II.

The ETC, which opened on Feb. 23, is not an emergency room, according to Dr. Jeffrey Huffman, president and CEO of USC Care Medical Group and medical director of the ETC. Instead, the center is a destination for established, adult USC private-practice patients who need same-day medical attention and who have obtained a phone referral from their USC primary physician or an on-call doctor.

ETC hours are 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday and from noon to 8 p.m. on Saturday, Sunday and holidays. The center is located on the lower level of the Healthcare Consultation Center II at 1520 San Pablo St. in Los Angeles.

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<http://uscnews.usc.edu/hscweekly/detail.php?recordnum=11106>

March 25, 2005

A Probe, Not an Echo

Viterbi School biomedical engineers have successfully demonstrated a novel "High-resolution Ultrasonic Transmission Tomography" (HUTT) that offers 3D images of soft tissue superior to those available from other systems, ultrasound, x-ray, or MRI.

Go to article:

http://viterbi.usc.edu/news/news/2005/2005_03_25_hutt.htm

Clive Taylor Resigns Pathology Chair Post to Focus on Research and Teaching

Long-time Keck School of Medicine chair of pathology, Clive R. Taylor, has announced his resignation, effective upon the recruitment of a suitable replacement for the position. He will continue on as senior associate dean for educational affairs, a position he has held since 1997, and will also continue his teaching and research in the Department of Pathology.

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<http://uscnews.usc.edu/hscweekly/detail.php?recordnum=11127>

USC/Norris Director Named AACR President

Peter A. Jones, director of the USC/Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, will assume the presidency of the American Association of Cancer Research, or AACR, in April.

AACR members comprise more than 24,000 laboratory and clinical scientists who perform basic, translational and clinical cancer research in the United States and 60 other countries. Jones will lead the group after being installed as president at AACR's 96th annual meeting, which will be held April 16-20 in Anaheim.

Jones, Distinguished Professor of Urology and Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, holds the H. Leslie Hoffman and Elaine S. Hoffman Chair in Cancer Research.

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<http://uscnews.usc.edu/hscweekly/detail.php?recordnum=11129>

Music, Pets may Soothe Dementia Patients

Approaches should be tried before drugs, study recommends. Music, pets and aromatherapy should be used to calm agitated or delusional patients before turning to drugs that often prove ineffective or have unhealthy side effects, researchers said.

After evaluating 29 studies dating to the mid-1960s, researchers at Wake Forest University noted, "it was discouraging to find that we currently don't have good drug therapies (for dementia-related behaviors)."

Go to article:

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6894703/>

Seniors Face Medicare Premium Jump

Senior citizens can expect at least a 12 percent increase in their Medicare premium for doctor visits next year, which could rise even higher if physician reimbursements aren't reduced.

Richard Foster, the chief actuary at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said Friday that physicians who treat Medicare beneficiaries are slated to see a 5 percent cut in their reimbursement rates beginning January 1. But, Foster said, he would be surprised if lawmakers allow such a cut to occur.

Go to article:

<http://www.cnn.com/2005/HEALTH/03/25/medicare.premiums.ap/index.html>

March 28, 2005

USC Keston Institute for Infrastructure to Study Impacts of the 2004 Tsunami on Southern Thailand

Richard Little, director of the University of Southern California Keston Institute for Infrastructure (www.usc.edu/keston), is part of an international team selected by the National Science Foundation to study the physical and social infrastructure impacts of the devastating tsunami that struck the Indian Ocean basin last December.

"The Keston Institute believes that the physical systems, human resources and organizational frameworks that deliver civil infrastructure services are so intertwined as to be inseparable," said Little. "This project should help develop a theoretical basis for what is emerging as a new paradigm in infrastructure systems and disaster resilience."

Go to article:

http://www.marshall.usc.edu/Web/News.cfm?doc_id=6937

James Gordon Elected Catherine Worthingham Fellow of the American Physical Therapy Association (FAPTA)

James E. Gordon, Ed.D., PT, Associate Professor and Chair of the USC Department of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy, has been elected a Catherine Worthingham Fellow of the American Physical Therapy Association (FAPTA) by the Association's Board of Directors. The Worthingham Fellowship is the highest honor bestowed in the physical therapy profession and Dr. Gordon's outstanding record of accomplishments makes him fitting for such recognition.

His pioneering work in motor control has been critical to advancing the view that physical therapists are clinicians with expertise in movement science and foremost for advancing the integration of motor control and learning as a basis for evidence based practice.

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http://pt.usc.edu/news/view_article.php?article_id=35&image_id=33

Second-Class Retirees

AARP goes to court to block policy that would shrink benefits at age 65. Responding to a lawsuit filed by AARP and six retirees, a federal judge in Philadelphia has entered an order that temporarily blocks a Bush administration policy under which millions of older retirees could lose some or all of their employer-sponsored health benefits.

The policy, adopted by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, would, by exempting retiree health plans from the federal age discrimination law, give employers a green light to reduce or eliminate benefits for their retirees who are 65 or older and thus eligible for Medicare.

Go to article:

http://www.aarp.org/bulletin/yourlife/second_class_retirees.html

Not Fade Away

Age-related hearing loss is more common than previously believed, especially among the generation raised on rock-and-roll music.

Age-related hearing loss is one of the most common conditions affecting older adults, according to the National Institutes of Health. One out of three people over age 60 have some form of hearing loss. By age 80, says House, "almost half the population has a hearing loss serious enough to affect their lives."

Go to article:

<http://www.usc.edu/hsc/info/pr/hmm/05winter/fade.html>

March 30, 2005

Unkindest Cuts

Will Bush's budget cripple programs that are important to you? The reductions President Bush seeks in this year's budget could inflict serious damage on an array of federal programs that benefit older Americans—from Meals on Wheels and public transportation to rent subsidies and medical research.

Go to article:

http://www.aarp.org/bulletin/yourmoney/unkindest_cuts.html

The Right Drugs for Your DNA

Medication your doctor prescribed may not work or does more harm than good, in the form of adverse side effects. Because people metabolize drugs at different rates, medicines don't work quite as intended in 25 to 60 percent of patients.

A newly approved genetic test may soon eliminate the guesswork in prescribing many drugs. The AmpliChip CYP450, cleared for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in December and expected to be available by June, is the first test that will allow doctors to tailor medication doses to a patient's genetic makeup.

Go to article:

http://www.aarp.org/bulletin/prescription/dna_drugs.html

March 31, 2005

Study Estimates Impact of Potential Tsunami on Southern California

A new study shows that a potential tsunami caused by an underwater landslide off the Palos Verdes peninsula could cause \$42 billion in economic damages to the area. In the worst case, a tsunami might force the closure of Los Angeles and Long Beach ports for a year. The study was conducted by faculty in the USC Viterbi School of Engineering and the School of Policy, Planning, and Development.

Go to article:

http://viterbi.usc.edu/news/news/2005/2005_03_28_tsunami.htm

To Train the Eye, Keep It Simple

Researchers find that human eyes learn best in an uncluttered setting, providing long-range implications for rehab therapy and the training of personnel who make decisions in chaotic situations.

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<http://www.usc.edu/uscnews/stories/11147.html>

April 1, 2005

Nikias Named USC provost, Sr. VP for Academic Affairs

C.L. Max Nikias, professor of electrical engineering and dean of the USC Viterbi School of Engineering, has been named provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. He will begin his new duties June 1.

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<http://uscnews.usc.edu/hscweekly/detail.php?recordnum=11152>

Keck School of Medicine Researchers Explain BRCA1 Gene's Indirect Link to Ovarian Cancer

Mutated BRCA1 genes cause ovarian cancer indirectly by interfering with the biochemical signals one ovarian cell sends to another, according to a team of researchers led by scientists at the USC/Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

"Before, we thought this gene was a classical tumor suppressor," said Louis Dubeau, professor of pathology at the Keck School and principal investigator on the paper. If that were the case, it would mean that mutation of the gene would allow the cell it is in to grow out of control and create a tumor." Instead, Dubeau said, "what we've shown is that the gene actually acts indirectly, that it disrupts interactions between different cell types."

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<http://uscnews.usc.edu/hscweekly/detail.php?recordnum=11157>

April 8, 2005

Searle Scholar Program Selects USC researcher

Li Zhang, assistant professor of physiology and biophysics at the Keck School of Medicine of USC and a member of the Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute, has been named to the Searle Scholars Program, one of the most prestigious awards available to young faculty working in the life sciences.

Zhang is the first Searle Scholar to be chosen from the Keck School of Medicine, and was one of only 15 selected from a pool nominated by more than 100 major research institutions across the United States. These scientists' disciplines range from chemistry and bioengineering to genomics and computation. The award carries with it \$240,000 in funding over three years.

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Prominent Ob/Gyn Chair to Step Down

Daniel R. Mishell Jr., Lyle G. McNeile professor and chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology of the Keck School of Medicine, will resign as chair on June 30. He has led the department since 1978. Mishell is a national and international pioneer in the fields of contraception, infertility and reproductive endocrinology related to menopause. His original studies spawned most of the devices and hormonal methods used for contraception today; at the same time, his research led to technologies and tools that allowed women who desired pregnancy to more easily conceive.

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<http://uscnews.usc.edu/hscweekly/detail.php?recordnum=11180>

Alzheimer's Foundation Lauds Keck School Researcher as 'Distinguished Scholar'

The John Douglas French Alzheimer's Foundation has named Ralf Langen, associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the Keck School of Medicine, the recipient of its first Distinguished Research Scholar award.

In congratulating Langen, Michael M. Minchin Jr., president of the foundation, said he found Langen's selection particularly rewarding because his work is considered "brilliant, unique and with the potential for opening up new horizons in the quest to find a cure for Alzheimer's."

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USC Preventive Medicine Team to Assess Tsunami Impact

Keck School of Medicine preventive medicine researchers aim to study the impact of the recent Indian Ocean tsunami on families and communities, as well as assess relief services and their effectiveness. The preventive medicine team is one of eight groups across USC that plan to conduct research related to the December earthquake and subsequent tsunami that devastated wide swaths of Indian Ocean coastal nations.

Preventive medicine's project is led by C. Anderson Johnson, the Sidney Garfield professor of Preventive Medicine and director of the USC Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research. It will help researchers seek funding for a 3-year longitudinal survey of tsunami impact and relief services at the individual, family and community levels. The pilot survey will assess the tsunami's immediate- and long-term impact on health, psychosocial wellbeing, economics, housing and community infrastructure. Of special interest will be relief services and unmet relief needs.

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<http://uscnews.usc.edu/hscweekly/detail.php?recordnum=11182>

Beta-blockers May Help Broader Group of Patients with Heart Problems

Beta-blockers, medications that block the action of certain hormones on the heart, can benefit patients with certain serious heart problems such as diastolic heart failure, according to cardiologists at the Keck School of Medicine and Loma Linda University Medical Center.

“Our findings are encouraging because there are no data on the survival benefit of medical therapy in CHF or severe MR patients with normal ejection fraction. CHF with normal ejection fraction, popularly referred to as diastolic heart failure, makes up nearly 50 percent of all CHF patients—and these patients have very similar mortality and morbidity as those with reduced ejection fraction,” said Padmini Varadarajan, advanced cardiac imaging fellow in the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine at the Keck School and the study's lead author.

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<http://uscnews.usc.edu/hscweekly/detail.php?recordnum=11184>