 Chancellor’s Corner

As both the safety net and specialty care provider for a wide region, LSU Health Shreveport elevates healthcare for all. To complete our core missions of education, research and patient care, we rely on the excellence and expertise of more than 300 faculty physicians as well as supportive community physicians. These highly-trained specialists are an asset to the entire community, often providing healthcare services only available at an academic medical center. Without the medical center, patients would have to travel to larger cities to receive care for the most complex conditions. Obviously, this would be difficult – if not impossible for the indigent patients we serve. Patients with or without insurance from a wide area are able to take advantage of the advanced treatments provided by these specialists who also train to take advantage of the advanced treatments.

A team of LCME reviewers visited the medical school in January for several days. Over the past five years we have put major efforts into our recruiting and it has really paid off. In all, we’ve brought in 204 new faculty members, including our first dermatologist in seven years; eight pediatric subspecialists; four trauma specialists; four department chairmen and a trauma division chief, four radiology subspecialists, three otolaryngology subspecialists, a movement disorder neurosurgeon and scientist, vascular surgeons, an interventional pulmonologist and 17 research scientists. We’re very pleased they are here to serve the healthcare and our region.

Members of the Class of 2018 learn about their new Macbooks for its integration of Macbooks & iPads into the curriculum. Photo Courtesy of Tim Magnor

The LARGEST Medical School Class in History

Forty-five years after first opening its doors, the School of Medicine welcomed its largest class ever in August. One hundred and twenty-five students make up the Class of 2018, an increase of seven over the class before it.

Interim Dean John Marymont, MD MBA, says this is the first step in the medical school’s goal of increasing class size by 25 more in the next five years. The School is putting together a task force to look at what is needed to get to a class size of 150. Issues like bigger classrooms and more faculty will be studied.

Members of the Class of 2018 hail from Shreveport, Bossier City, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Lafayette and small towns across the state. They range in age from 21 to 32 years old. There are parents, former nurses, college athletes, servicemen, a professional cheerleader instructor and a former policeman. Many are well-traveled and speak other languages fluently. A majority graduated from LSU in Baton Rouge, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Centenary College or another Louisiana school, but others attended colleges like Cornell, Washington University, Notre Dame, Fordham and Washington & Lee.

The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) has granted a full eight-year re-accreditation to the LSU Health Shreveport School of Medicine. Accreditation assures that the academic programs of the school meet high standards, and also is a requirement for federal funding.

"We are very pleased to receive the maximum accreditation," said Chancellor Robert A. Barish, MD MBA. "Some of the best medical schools in the nation have not been able to achieve what our school has just accomplished."

John V. Marymont, MD MBA, Interim Dean of the School of Medicine said academic leadership spent 18 months reviewing and analyzing programs and policies in preparation for the accreditation.

Scientists Win Major NIH Funding

Two LSU Health Shreveport faculty members are on pace to collect nearly $6.5 million combined in federal research grants over the next five years. Dr. Dennis J. O’Callaghan, Boyd Professor and Head of the Department of Microbiology, has been awarded a 5-year grant of more than $4.82 million to continue and expand the capabilities of the institution’s Center for Molecular and Tumor Virology (CMTV), and Gouhong Li PhD, Associate Professor of Neurosurgery & Physiology will receive $1.6 million from the NIH to study a protein that could control brain injury after a stroke.

CMTV, the most funded program in the health sciences center’s history, supports young researchers with facilities and mentoring. A new Pilot Project Program will award four grants of $50,000 annually to these young scientists for new areas of research.

Dr. Li will investigate the role of immune mechanisms in stroke-related brain damage and repair. Understanding the process could result in new treatments for stroke.

Inside This Issue:

- Cancer-Preventing Gum
- Progress on Medical Education Endowment
- National Cancer Institute Clinical Trials

By the Numbers

88

3 Professors and instructors who have joined our faculty over the past year

Cancer-Preventing Gum
Progress on Medical Education Endowment
National Cancer Institute Clinical Trials

School of Medicine
School of Graduate Studies
School of Allied Health Professions
LSU Health Sciences Foundation

Affiliated Hospitals:
University Health Shreveport
University Health Conway

Vol. 14, No. 5 September - October 2014
Dr. Nathan Tests Chewing Gum for Cancer Prevention

One roadblock in her effort to apply the research to human health is that the stomach, the traditional way oral medicine enters the body, does not absorb curcumin well. Dr. Nathan hypothesized that gum may be a more effective delivery system because it allows for direct mucosal absorption of curcumin, bypassing the stomach. Her idea is to create a chewing gum that slowly releases curcumin to treat upper aerodigestive diseases and head and neck problems. The funds from LIFT will allow Dr. Nathan to contract with a medicinal chemist to perfect the curcumin gum.

Nearly $500,000 in Funding

Drug Discovery Program Working With Three New Grants

Recent funding for three different projects will enhance the work of a drug discovery and development program operated through the Feist-Weiller Cancer Center called INLET, an acronym for Innovative North Louisiana Experimental Therapeutics. INLET hopes to leverage these investments and others to eventually commercialize drugs to treat disease and increase economic development in north Louisiana.

Professor James Cardelli, director of the program, will receive nearly $340,000 in NIH funding over five years as part of a collaboration with an LSU New Orleans faculty member. The $1.8 million study is investigating whether existing drugs might be able to be repurposed to prevent fungal infections in patients with cancer and diabetes as well as others with compromised immune systems. Dr. Cardelli also received a $20,000 NIH award to work with the Botanical Research Center in Baton Rouge. They will investigate whether an extract from Russian Tarragon would be an effective anti-inflammatory and anti-diabetic treatment.

The program received a $128,000 grant to take part in research to determine if directing natural products to specific receptors on tumor cells will improve their cancer-fighting effectiveness. The research is part of a larger study by a new biotechnology company, INLET will examine if targeting of the spice, curcumin, will work as an anti-cancer agent.

The LSU Crohn’s Research Team (From L to R): Elvin Hardy, MD, Physiology Fellow; Moheb Boktor, MD, Assistant Professor of Gastroenterology; Andrew Motlis, MD, Gastroenterology Fellow; Paul Jordan, MD, Clinical Associate Professor of Gastroenterology; Steven Alexander, PhD, Professor of Physiology; Avinash Aravantagi, MD, Gastroenterology Fellow; and Kenneth Manas, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor of Gastroenterology. Not pictured: Ankur Sheth, MD, Assistant Professor of Gastroenterology, Felix Becker, MD PhD, Physiology Fellow and James Morris, MD, Assistant Professor of Gastroenterology.

Nearly all patients treated with radiation and chemotherapy for head and neck cancer experience side-effects. These include ulcers in the mouth, poor saliva, painful swallowing, infections, and tooth decay. These complications affect a patient’s comfort and quality of life, and often prevent the continuation of cancer treatment.

Dr. Gulshan Sunavala-Dossabhoy, Associate Professor of Research in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, has received a two year National Institutes of Health grant worth nearly $340,000 to try to find a way to prevent the unwanted side effects.

“To suppress off-target effects of cancer therapy and promote cancer kill, we will reengineer a cellular protein called Tousled to discriminate between cancer and non-cancer tissues,” Dr. Dossabhoy said. “Treatment with this protein will protect normal tissues, but make tumors sensitive to cancer therapy.”

Crohn’s Disease Researchers Recognized

The American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) is honoring the research of faculty and fellows from the Physiology and Gastroenterology Departments in advance of the ACG Annual Scientific Meeting. Picked for its scientific merit in the inflammatory bowel disease category, the research looked at the relationship between biologic therapy and the treatment of Crohn’s Disease (CD). Biologics are a class of drugs that can relieve CD symptoms, but they also carry risk of side effects like infection. In this study, investigators questioned if biologics’ responsiveness can be predicted by disease status—active or remission.

ACG leadership will present the research award to Dr. Andrew Motlis, Gastroenterology Fellow and first author of the study, during its meeting October 20 in Philadelphia.

The LSU Crohn’s Research Team (From L to R): Elvin Hardy, MD, Physiology Fellow; Moheb Boktor, MD, Assistant Professor of Gastroenterology; Andrew Motlis, MD, Gastroenterology Fellow; Paul Jordan, MD, Clinical Associate Professor of Gastroenterology; Steven Alexander, PhD, Professor of Physiology; Avinash Aravantagi, MD, Gastroenterology Fellow; and Kenneth Manas, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor of Gastroenterology. Not pictured: Ankur Sheth, MD, Assistant Professor of Gastroenterology, Felix Becker, MD PhD, Physiology Fellow and James Morris, MD, Assistant Professor of Gastroenterology.
Molecular Profiling Program Takes Off

Doctors at Feist-Weiller Cancer Center will now have access to innovative, precision-medicine technology that determines the unique biological characteristics of each individual patient’s cancer tumor. Once that information is known, physicians can identify tailored chemotherapy or radiation regimens to attack it. The new capability is the result of emerging technology called tumor profiling. Feist-Weiller will partner with Caris Life Sciences to offer the breakthrough technology to local cancer patients.

The region’s first clinical molecular profiling program will use Caris’ tumor profiling service, Caris Molecular Intelligence™, to enhance the clinical and research expertise of Feist-Weiller Cancer Center. It will expand the center’s personalized medicine approach to care and offer more precise treatment planning for patients. The partnership with Caris also includes clinical support, patient and physician education. It additionally creates a forum to pursue joint research opportunities.

“As the only institution in a 250-mile radius to offer these capabilities, our partnership with Caris is critical to providing more precise, personalized care for cancer patients treated at our Center each year,” said Glenn Mills, MD FACP, Professor & Director of Feist-Weiller Cancer Center. “This type of technology is integral to better understanding the unique molecular characteristics of a patient’s disease, which enables more targeted treatment planning.”

In recent years, molecular profiling has become a valuable tool for oncologists when making treatment decisions for patients with difficult-to-treat and/or rare and aggressive cancers. Caris Molecular Intelligence correlates the molecular data from a tumor with biomarker/drug associations from the latest clinical and scientific literature on cancer. This information is used to recommend therapies more or less likely to benefit the patient. It will also identify potential clinical trials for the patient. The system uses traditional pathology analysis methods, along with more-recently developed DNA sequencing technologies.

Faculty believe the molecular profiling program will elevate not only the level of clinical care for patients, but also the Center’s research programs.

Surgery Faculty, Residents Awarded Provisional Patent for Surgery Invention

Pleurodesis is a procedure that prevents fluid buildup in the lungs. Four surgeons noticed that while it was effective when executed perfectly, it had a lower rate of success in reality. They decided to come up with a solution. Vyas Rao, MD, Associate Professor of Clinical Surgery; Navdeep Sunra, MD, Assistant Professor of Surgery; Sergei Kaslow, MD, former surgery resident; and Alireza Hamidian Jahromi, MD, surgery resident, have been granted a provisional patent from the United States Patent and Trademark Office for their Talc VATS Delivery System (TVDS).

Surgeons often use video-assisted thoracic surgery to perform pleurodesis. This involves the insertion of a spray tube alongside the camera. An angle is inadvertently created between the spray tube and the camera which can lead the surgeon to misguide the Talc if not exactly in line with the camera.

The invention, TVDS, is an attachment piece designed to connect the tubal camera device and talc spray, eliminating the angle between the camera and talc spray tube when inserted separately. The inventors believe that this system will therefore improve the accuracy of pleurodesis and evenly distribute the chemical irritant in the chest cavity. An article about the device has been accepted for publication in the journal The American Surgeon.

Call for Dr. David DeSha Endowment for Medical Education DONATIONS

The David DeSha Endowment for Medical Education was born out of a generous gift in 2012 from Dr. James Small ('82) and Dr. Karen Small ('12) to support the education needs of the medical school.

To give or learn more, visit www.lsuhsfoundation.org or call 318.861.0855.

With over 100 medical school alumni and supporters donating so far, the Foundation has raised 25% of its $250,000 goal for the endowment.
School of Allied Health Professions Names COPPING Award Winner

Dr. Marie Vazquez Morgan is the 2014 Allen A. Copping Excellence in Teaching Award Winner in Allied Health. Dr. Morgan is an Associate Professor of Otolaryngology/Head & Neck Surgery. She was lauded for his service to the ENT field, both in the military and in academic medicine. According to the event program, Dr. Stucker considers one of his finest achievements the fact that every resident who matriculated through the residency programs he oversaw achieved board certification. This is over the span of 40 years, 11 at the Navy and 29 at the School of Medicine in St. Louis.

Receiving an AHNS presidential citation, Dr. Nathan was recognized for her leadership, research and clinical skills.

**Publications**

David Mashalbin Anzriem, MD, Internal Medicine Resident; Aliveh Hamidahmadian, MD, Assistant Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine; Co-author, "Obesity and Female Stress Urinary Incontinence: Are They Necessary or Even Helpful?" SUFU Annual Meeting; Podium Session on Urinary/Female Urology/Incontinence.

Vyas Rao, MD, FACS, Associate Professor of Cardiovascular Surgery; "2014 Global Summit.


$5.6 Million NATIONAL CANCER GRANT

Will Fund Network To Provide Local Access To Latest NCI Clinical Trials

Dr. Tom Arnold

Patients with cancer—particularly the underserved—will have local access to National Cancer Institute clinical trials through a new regional network of cancer centers that will serve Louisiana and parts of Mississippi. The Gulf South Minority/Underserved NCI Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP) is being established with a $5.6 million grant from the National Cancer Institute. This program creates a network of physicians, nurses and researchers from major teaching and private medical institutions to deliver the latest promising investigational treatments for cancer. While open to all cancer patients, the focus is minority and underserved patients, who die at higher rates from cancer than others.

LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans partnered with LSU Health Shreveport and Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center to successfully compete for the grant, one of only 12 of its kind. The new network currently includes 25 clinical sites covering 80% of the population of Louisiana and portions of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Locally, these include the Feist-Weiller Cancer Center, along with Willis-Knighton Health System and Desoto Regional Medical Center. More will be added as the program develops.

“We are excited to be one of the initial sites participating in this research effort. This is the first time we have a public-private partnership such as this that will bring cutting edge cancer research treatments to the entire state,” said Glenn Mills, MD, FACP, Director of the Feist-Weiller Cancer Center on the campus of LSU Health Shreveport.

The program allows oncologists in many community hospitals to provide treatment to patients closer to home, helping reduce expenses and keeping patients and families closer together.

Expanded clinical trials will also create jobs for health care personnel and researchers in Louisiana conducting health disparities research, developing cancer care delivery services and implementing advanced clinical trials. Pharmaceutical companies will have more opportunities to participate in the new biomedical and clinical research programs. It has been estimated that this kind of activity could bring in an additional $10 million over the grant period.

Programs in cancer prevention, screening and survivorship will also be expanded. Research will be funded to address health disparities in the region.

According to LSUHSC New Orleans’ Louisiana Tumor Registry, the incidence rates for cancers of all sites combined among white and black men as well as black women in Louisiana are significantly higher than those for their national counterparts. Louisiana also has a significantly higher death rate for all cancers combined than the national average.

Donna Collins, Dr. Jeremy Kamil and Dr. Gouhong Li

STROKE

Gouhong Li PhD, Associate Professor of Neurosurgery & Physiology, received a $165,000 grant to investigate the theory that combining the clot-busting drug tPA with a drug that inhibits the action of a specific blood/brain enzyme could extend the window to restore healing blood flow for stroke patients. The drug tPA is the only FDA approved and the most beneficial proven treatment of strokes caused by a blood clot in the brain. Unfortunately, clinical use of tPA is limited due to the need to begin the treatment within a 3 to 4.5 hour window and due to increased risk of bleeding complications. In the two-year study, Dr. Li’s lab hopes to prove that the drug combination will allow more time to safely use tPA to reopen the blocked vessels. This could reduce the damage to the brain and prevent deaths.

PULMONARY HYPERTENSION

Pulmonary hypertension is a fatal disease targeting predominately women of childbearing years. Tammy R. Dugas, PhD, Associate Professor of Pharmacology, Toxicology and Neurosciences, has long been intrigued by the disease. With a two-year $165,000 award, her lab will try to understand the disease progression and why women are targeted for pulmonary hypertension. The answers to those questions could lead to development of new therapies for the treatment of this female-selective disease.

HUMAN CYTOMEGALOVIRUS (HCMV)

Human Cytomegalovirus (HCMV) infection is the largest virus in people and has been linked with the development of cardiovascular disease. Jeremy Kamil, PhD, Assistant Professor of Microbiology and Immunology and Doctoral Candidate Donna Collins both received AHA awards for separate projects involving HCMV and its relationship to heart disease.

Dr. Kamil’s lab will receive $165,000 over the next two years to investigate how a cellular protein that normally helps prevent cancers is involved in viral infection. The hope is that the research will lead to an understanding of how to control HCMV infection in patients. “Viruses are excellent windows into the molecular nature of life,” Dr. Kamil explained. “This molecule is at the intersection of how the cell controls its growth and division. In order to replicate their genomes in the nucleus, DNA viruses all have to employ strategies to manage it. Figuring out the details is very exciting.”

Dr. Kamil’s findings could also have implications for treating cancer, he said.

Collins, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Microbiology & Immunology, has received a two year $52,000 postdoctoral fellowship award from the AHA to try to understand the ways in which the HCMV virus may promote development of cardiovascular diseases. In particular, her lab has looked at how the virus infects certain white blood cells and reprograms them as carriers. “We believe these virus-driven cellular changes also contribute to the development of cardiovascular diseases like atherosclerosis,” she said.

A better understanding of the infection process could lead to the development of new treatments or preventative therapies for a variety of HCMV-associated diseases.

LSU Health Shreveport Researchers Receive Heart Association Grants

Four LSU Health Shreveport scientists have received grants of more than $500,000 from the Southeast Chapter of the American Heart Association for research on stroke, pulmonary hypertension and human cytomegalovirus (HCMV).

HRSA Grants Provide HIV/AIDS and Poison Center Services for Region and State

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, makes grants to organizations to improve and expand health care services for underserved people. Two programs that have benefited from these programs are the HIV/AIDS clinic and the Louisiana Poison Center. Both programs were recently notified that they have been awarded ongoing funding.

A $1.8 million grant from HRSA will provide three-years of funding for outpatient treatment of HIV/AIDS patients, including primary care, dental, psychiatric and substance abuse services. Dr. John Vanchiere, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Chief of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, received the funding under the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Act. It is the 14th year for the program award to LSUHSC-S.

The Poison Center will receive more than $1.2 million from HRSA over the next five years. Thomas Arnold, MD, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Emergency Medicine, said these federal funds, which were first awarded in 2005, make up approximately 20% of the center’s overall budget. “The HRSA grant is critical to our ability to provide 24/7 Poison Center services for the entire state of Louisiana,” he noted.
Invited to Reunite

The LSU Health Shreveport Office of Alumni Affairs is hosting a reunion for the School of Medicine honoring the graduating classes of 1984, 1994 and 2004. The two-day event will feature a welcome reception at the Petroleum Club of Shreveport on Friday evening as well as a full day of events on Saturday, including a continuing medical education session on online health resources, golf at the Southern Trace Country Club, a tour of the Health Sciences Center from Dr. David DeSha and class-specific cocktail receptions and dinners at local restaurants. Alumni interested in attending may call the Alumni Affairs office at (318) 675-6065 or visit www.lsuhscshreveport.edu/AlumniAffairs/ to download the registration forms.

EVENTS
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3:
Welcome Reception
6:30 pm at Petroleum Club of Shreveport

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4:
CME, Where To Find It - Online Health Resources
10 am at the downtown Shreveport Hilton Hotel

Golf
at Southern Trace Country Club
(tee times start around 12:30 pm)

Tour of LSU Health Sciences Center by Dr. DeSha
2 pm at LSU Medical School

Cocktail Reception & Dinner
6 pm at Superior Steakhouse (Classes of 1984 and 2004)
6 pm at Ristorante Giuseppe’s (Class of 1994)

Double
It’s been a busy summer for OB/GYN faculty and residents. They helped to welcome eleven sets of twins between May 21 and August 17. Dr. James Barrow had four of those deliveries. “These things tend to come in cycles,” he said. “It was unusual but exciting to have so many sets of twins so close together.”

AUGUST graduation
Seventy-three students from the Schools of Graduate Studies & Allied Health Professions graduated August 9. Lampton Enochs, Moonbot Studios partner and producer, addressed the crowd, encouraging graduates to keep dreaming.

New Leaders and Faculty

Affido J. Ashish, MD,
Assistant Professor, Clinical Pathology
Julie C. Ball, MD,
Clinical Associate Professor, Radiology
Stephan D. Baker Jr., MD,
Assistant Professor, Clinical Emergency Medicine
Matthew Barrington, MD,
Clinical Assistant Professor, Administration
Mark W. Chacon, MD,
Instructor, Clinical Family Medicine
Harold Chen, MD,
Clinical Professor, Pediatrics
Absia R. Clark, MD,
Instructor, Clinical Family Medicine
Sean N. de Barros, MD,
Instructor, Clinical Fam Med Rural & Comm Med
Paul Domenico, MD,
Assistant Professor, Cardiology
Yuling Dong, PhD,
Assistant Professor, Orthopedics
Donna J. Dunbar, MD,
Clinical Instructor, Physical Therapy
Ashley E. Fabre, MD,
Clinical Assistant Professor, Surgery
Anthony T. Flanery, MD,
Clinical Assistant Professor, Family Medicine
Brian S. Galpin, MD,
Clinical Assistant Professor, Psychiatry
Amit A. Khan, MD,
Clinical Assistant Professor, Anesthesiology
Myra K. Livezey, MD,
Clinical Assistant Professor, Internal Medicine
Morgan L. Manier, MHS,
Instructor, Cellular Biology & Anatomy

Joseph Micciro, MD,
Executive Director for Campus Operations
Claude B. Minor Jr., MD,
Clinical Assistant Professor, Ed Combs
Richard D. Murray, MD,
Instructor, Clinical Neurosurgery
Shahid Nadwra, MD,
Assistant Professor, Clinical Pediatrics
Huyng W. Nham, PhD,
Assistant Professor, Pharmacology & Toxicology
Uyen D. Nguyen, MD,
Instructor, Clinical Pediatrics

Delivering Double
It’s been a busy summer for OB/GYN faculty and residents. They helped to welcome eleven sets of twins between May 21 and August 17. Dr. James Barrow had four of those deliveries. “These things tend to come in cycles,” he said. “It was unusual but exciting to have so many sets of twins so close together.”

Dr. Ben Pearce, 3rd Year Surgery Resident; Dr. F. Bennett Pearce, LSU School of Medicine alumnus and grandfather; Amanda Pearce, Occupational Therapy Faculty and Dawn Pearce, proud grandmother, admire twins Magdalyn Elise (held by Ben) and Evelyn Rose (in Amanda’s arms).