



# Scoop



Kidney Month

Friday, March 3, 2000

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - HOUSTON MEDICAL SCHOOL

## EVENTS TO KNOW:

- **Town Hall Meeting**, Fri., March 17, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., MSB 3.001
- **Annual Faculty Meeting**, Wed., May 24, 11:30 lunch, 11:45 meeting, MSB 3.001.

## UTmost Interest

**Dr. M. Yusoff Dawood**, the Berel Held Professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences and director, Division of Reproductive Endocrinology, was appointed to the Editorial Board of *Fertility and Sterility*, the official journal of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine...**Dr. William Dowhan**, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, has been elected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology, a leadership group that recognizes excellence, originality, and creativity in the microbiological sciences...**Dr. Pedro Ruiz**, Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, has been elected and installed as President of the American College of Psychiatrists on Feb. 19. He also was elected and installed as Treasurer of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology on Jan. 2. Both positions have a one-year tenure.

## K.I.N.D.E.Rx AWARDS

Founded by **Dr. Maria Ferris**, Pediatrics, in 1994, K.I.N.D.E.Rx (Kids In Need of Drug Evaluation and Rx-Treatment), is having a gala awards event to honor those who have contributed to the well-being of children at risk, Thurs., **March 23**, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m., Crowne Plaza Houston Medical Center, 6701 South Main Street. Festivities will include a silent auction, fine cuisine, music by "Mood Indigo," and door prizes. Ticket prices are \$50/person; corporate sponsorships are available. Call **Elisabet Chow**, 713-500-5746.



## UT-H STUDENTS COMPETE

The Eighth Annual UT-Houston Health Care Team Competition, on Tues., **March 28**, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m., MSB 3.001, not only benefits the students participating, but, say the organizers, will provide the audience with valuable insight into interdisciplinary health care.

## "OLD TURKS" TO INDUCT DR. YEH IN MAY

**Dr. Edward T. H. Yeh**, vice-chair, Division of Cardiology, and director, Division of Molecular Medicine, and director, Research Center for Cardiovascular Diseases at the Institute of Molecular Medicine, has just been notified of his election to membership in the Association of American Physicians, aka the "Old Turks." Yeh, trained as an immunologist by **Dr. Baruj Benacerraf**, a Nobel laureate in Physiology or Medicine, was nominated by **Drs. Irma Gigli**, Internal Medicine, and associate director, Institute of Molecular Medicine, and **James T. Willerson**, chair, Internal Medicine, and head of cardiology services, Memorial Hermann Hospital, Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) General Hospital, and the Texas Heart Institute.



Dr. Edward Yeh

Yeh's early interest was in autoimmunity, T cell development, and T cell activation. In recent years, his lab has focused on the role of inflammation in the development of atherosclerosis and vascular biology. They also developed the first in vivo model of monocyte/macrophage homing to atherosclerotic plaques in Apo-E deficient mice. Recently, they've shown a novel role for PPAR $\gamma$  agonist, which is currently used in the treatment of type II diabetes, in modulating vascular inflammation in vitro and in vivo. In addition to his interest in vascular immunology, Yeh also opened up new research frontiers by discovering three novel biochemical pathways, and linking them to human diseases.

From 1988 to 1993, his lab deciphered the biosynthetic pathway for the glycosylphosphatidylinositol (GPI) anchor for membrane proteins in humans and applied these insights to elucidate the pathogenesis of paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinuria.

In 1996, they discovered a novel ubiquitin-like protein, called sentrin. (See *Scoop* 9/3/99). Within three years, they identified the activating enzyme complex, conjugating enzyme, and deconjugating enzyme for this novel post-translational protein modification pathway. Insights from this novel pathway have allowed Yeh to investigate the molecular pathogenesis of acute promyelocytic leukemia and the regulation of transcription factors such as NF $\kappa$ B, and oncogenes, such as p53.

In 1997, Yeh's lab discovered another ubiquitin-like protein, called NEDD8, involved in post-translational modification of critical cellular proteins. They cloned both the activating and conjugating enzymes for this pathway. Understanding here has helped Yeh and his colleagues to investigate the molecular pathogenesis of the von Hippel-Lindau Syndrome and the basis of oxygen sensing at the cellular level.

## TONIGHT'S CIRCLE OF LIFE GALA AT THE GEORGE R. BROWN

**Dr. Patti Jayne Ross**, Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Sciences, and **Dr. Richard Smalling**, Internal Medicine/Cardiology, participated in the planning stages of tonight's Memorial Hermann Foundation's "Circle of Life Gala," with Wayne Foster Entertainment's musical extravaganza. Proceeds will benefit Memorial Hermann Cancer Services.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TEXAS STATE BOARD?

The Texas State Board of Medical Examiners' (TSBME) Annual Question and Answer Session is slated for Monday, **March 20**, from 11 - 11:55 a.m. in MSB 3.001, with **Dr. Bruce A. Levy**, Executive Director of TSBME, offering information on the functions of the Board and licensing procedures. Lunch available for the first 200 attendees. All medical students are urged to attend.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-HOUSTON  
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER



Medical School

L. Maximilian Buja, M.D., Dean  
Bryant Boutwell, Dr.P.H., Assistant Dean  
Colleen O'Brien, Editor  
e-mail: Colleen.L.O'Brien@uth.tmc.edu  
FAX: (713) 500-0597  
E-Scoop online: <http://www.med.uth.tmc.edu>



Produced weekly by the Office of Community Affairs and Public Education

## DR. BRUCE KONE TAKES HELM OF RENAL DISEASES DIVISION

Ask **Dr. Bruce Kone** about kidney disease, and you'll get a graduate education. As the new director for the Division of Renal Diseases and Hypertension in the UT-Houston Medical School's Department of Internal Medicine, Dr. Kone is downright passionate about the prospects for major advancements that will benefit patients in the new millennium.

"There is tremendous opportunity for translational research to bring about wonderful advancements in the prevention, recognition, and treatment of kidney diseases and hypertension in the coming decade," he says. "This division has nine full-time nephrologists who are active at multiple Medical School-affiliated hospitals and clinics. Our group is highly funded in basic and clinical research while recognized for the quality and scope of its clinical practice and teaching. Right now we have 10 fellowship slots and enough can not be said about the dedication of our faculty in this division across all areas of patient care, teaching, research, and service," he notes with a high degree of personal pride.



**Dr. Bruce Kone**

Because kidney disease tends to get less attention compared to other major diseases like cancer, heart disease and stroke, he explains, there is a two-fold challenge here to educate the community and close the gap on preventing and treating these silent, progressive killers that are on the increase (especially among African-Americans and Hispanics). According to the National Kidney Foundation, more than 50,000 Americans die each year because of kidney disease and about 20 million

Americans are affected by kidney and urologic diseases with millions more at risk — making kidney disease alone one of the costliest illnesses in the U.S. today. Additional facts to know about kidney disease can be found on the organization's website, <<http://www.kidney.org/general/aboutdisease/>>.

The good news, he adds, is a national recognition that kidney disease deserves more attention and research dollars. The recent report, *Healthy People 2010*, published by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Surgeon General, puts a spotlight on chronic kidney disease as one of the nation's priority health issues.

"It's important not only to have kidney disease on the nation's radar screen for prevention and treatment, but to reverse the under-recognized fact that kidney disease increases an individual's risk for numerous other chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and hypertension. Progress made in early diagnosis and effective treatment of renal diseases goes a long way to reducing the prevalence of many other life-threatening conditions," he emphasizes.

One who can appreciate this more than anyone is **Dr. James T. Willerson**, chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine at the UT-Houston Medical School and head of cardiology services at Memorial Hermann Hospital, Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) General Hospital, and the Texas Heart Institute.

"I couldn't be more pleased with Dr. Kone's decision to take the leadership role of this division. We need someone with an unfailing dedication to patient care, an impressive research track record and leadership skills, and a role model for teaching and developing innovative teaching opportunities. Bruce Kone is all of the above and more," says Dr. Willerson.

A molecular biologist who received his medical degree at the University of Florida School of Medicine, Dr. Kone came to the UT-Houston Medical School in 1995. A highly funded and published researcher, Dr. Kone is understandably proud of his multiple dean's teaching awards that come from the students and faculty peers. In addition to his new division director role in Internal Medicine, he also serves as division director for Clinical Pharmacology in the School's Department of Integrative Biology and Pharmacology, a position he has held since 1998. In that role he reports to Nobel laureate **Dr. Ferid Murad**, who chairs the department.

"Despite the many challenges renal diseases and hypertension present, I'm very optimistic about what is being accomplished here and in the future," he observes. "There are outstanding physicians in this division who currently have more than \$7 million in NIH funding while seeing patients around-the-clock. We have a fantastic intensive care unit for dialysis at Memorial Hermann Hospital and outstanding fellows who benefit from unique training programs such as our joint medicine/pediatric residency program."

Also high on Dr. Kone's list of priorities is mentorship: "We continue to build our core curriculum for teaching undergraduate medical students while guiding clinical scientists into academic investigative careers that bridge research and clinical practice. That takes mentoring and example and those are two areas we are both strong in and dedicated to in this division."

- B. Boutwell