



# Scoop

Feb. 7, 2003

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

## Events to Know

### February

**8 Minority Faculty Annual Banquet**, Houston Marriott West Loop, 6-9 p.m., contact <Miguel.Da.Cunha@uth.tmc.edu>.

**13 Emergency Response Town Hall Meeting**, representatives from UTPD and UT facilities available for concerns, noon, MSB 3.001.

**21 Dr. Donald Orlic** will address "Stem cells for myocardial regeneration," 11 a.m., IBT Bldg.

**22 Doctors Orchestra of Houston**, 7 p.m., Stude Hall, Rice U. Tickets, <www.DoctorsOrchestraHouston.org>.

**25 Violence Free Workplace Training**, 10 a.m., MSB 2.135. Contact **Linda Utterback**, 713-500-5017.

**26 Violence Free Workplace Training**, 2 p.m., MSB 2.135. Contact **Linda Utterback**, 713-500-5017.

**CORRECTION -** In a previous *Scoop* (1/24/03), the Division of Cardiology was incorrectly titled the "Division of Cardiovascular Medicine," in the article "Giri Outlines His Vascular Medicine Program Message." Please note.

## UTMost Interest

**Dr. Jonathan K. Ivins**, Neurosurgery, was awarded \$150,000 from the Christopher Reeves Paralysis Foundation for his study, "A Combinational Approach to Overcoming Growth Inhibition in Spinal Cord."

**FINANCIAL UPDATES -** Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to keep their fingers on the university's financial pulse by visiting a new Web page created by the Office of Public Affairs. "The Financial Pulse," at <www.uthouston.edu/facStaff/fin\_pulse/index.html>, offers answers to Frequently Asked Questions, including the particulars of the current hiring freeze.

## LIVER TRANSPLANT EXPERTS DRs. MIELES AND MERHAV ARRIVE

In recent months, two new members of the liver transplant team here at UT-Houston Medical School, **Dr. Luis A. Miele**s, professor, Department of Surgery, Division of Organ Transplantation, and head of the UT-Houston Liver Transplant Program, and **Dr. Hadar J. Merhav**, associate professor, Department of Surgery, Division of Organ Transplantation, have joined our ranks.



Dr. Luis A. Miele



Dr. Hadar J. Merhav

"In accordance with the Health Science Center's vision for the 21st century, we aspire to be the premier liver center in southeast Texas," Miele said. Liver transplantations will be done using whole organs and split livers from cadaveric donors and segmental grafts from healthy live donors. Presently about two to three patients with end-stage liver disease die every day because of the lack of organs. Live donor and split liver techniques were developed to increase the supply of livers, Miele said.

"Most of these procedures require very careful selection of donor and recipient in order to optimize the outcome and minimize the risks to both donors and recipients," Miele said.

With the addition of these two new faculty members, a new liver transplant program is firmly in place. Both Miele and Merhav perform transplants in adult and pediatric patients, as well split and live donor liver transplant operations.

There are more than 100 liver transplant centers in the country, Miele said. "Only a very few – four or five in the nation – are doing a large enough number of these types of procedures to be considered a major live donor liver transplant center."

Miele hopes to recruit two more faculty members in the next six months to round out the liver transplant team.

"I'm sure this program is going to make important strides not only for the organ transplantation division in Surgery but also in hepatology, a component of the gastrointestinal division of Internal Medicine, as well as the gastrointestinal division in Pediatrics," **Dean Max Buja** said.

Historically, the standard had been cadaveric liver transplants. In adults, the procedure is mostly done in patients with liver damage secondary to toxins, hepatitis C, and alcohol.

*The "new" liver can perform basic functions and grow to normal size.*

In pediatric liver transplants, biliary atresia cases were problematic, Dean Buja said. Biliary atresia is the congenital absence or closure of the ducts that drain bile from the liver.

(See back page)



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Today pediatric living related liver transplantation involves transplanting a segment of a living donor liver into a recipient. The "new" liver can perform basic functions and grow to normal size.

"But the push goes on to improve the transplant techniques. That impetus comes from the simple fact that adults and kids are dying every day in this country due to inaccessibility to transplantation," Dean Buja said.

Many adults with liver disease can benefit from transplantation. Adult to adult live donor liver transplantation is a far more complex procedure, a far more formidable surgery, than adult donor to child recipient. The reason is that the amount of liver that needs to be removed from a healthy donor, in order to support life in an adult patient, is 50 - 60 percent, whereas in a child the amount is much smaller, Mieles said.

Mieles earned his medical degree from the National University School of Medicine in Bogotá, Columbia. He recently came from the University of Rochester School of Medicine, where he was an associate professor of surgery, and the University of Rochester Strong Memorial Hospital, where he was the attending surgeon and director of pediatric transplantation.

"At the University of Rochester we performed last year about 100 living-related liver transplant surgeries," he said.

Mieles is a member of numerous organizations, including the International Pediatric Transplant Association, the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract, the International Liver Transplant Society, the American Society of General Surgeons, and the American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition.

At the University of Rochester, Mieles also taught surgical residents in the operating room and surgical wards and the surgical residents and transplant fellows for several years previously at the University of Pittsburgh.

He has served as director of numerous committees in his specialty: liver, kidney, pancreas, and intestinal transplantation and was

a guest speaker at Mercy Hospital in Buffalo last March, addressing "Pediatric Living Related Liver Transplantation."

Merhav is a graduate of the Hadassah Hebrew University School of Medicine in Jerusalem, Israel. He completed his residency in General Surgery at the Kaplan Medical Center in Rehovot, Israel, and went on to do a fellowship in organ transplantation in Pittsburgh.

After completing his fellowship, Merhav joined Mieles in establishing a successful liver transplantation program in Oklahoma City. In 1995, Merhav returned to Israel to the Tel Aviv Medical Center, where he established a liver transplantation program and was active in liver, kidney, and pancreas transplantation.

Merhav performed the first successful adult living donor liver transplant in Israel.

Historically the Medical School has enjoyed a tremendous reputation in the area of organ transplantation, Dean Max Buja said. **Dr. Barry Kahan**, professor and director, Department of Surgery - Organ Transplantation, who has been in this field more than 20 years, was the driving force behind establishing a kidney transplantation center.

During the evolution of that program, Kahan recruited pancreatic transplantation experts. Ten years ago, a liver transplantation center was founded. **Dr. Pat Wood** and **Dr. Claire Ozaki** were involved with the early program. Three to four years ago, Drs. Wood and Ozaki went into private practice, but they retain their association with Memorial Hermann Hospital. The Texas Liver Center at Memorial Hermann Hospital is still in existence.

In recent times, there developed an interest among Dr. Kahan, **Dr. Richard Andrassy**, chairman, Department of Surgery, and Memorial Hermann Hospital to collaboratively build the liver transplant program back up.

The recruitment search led to hiring both Mieles and Merhav, who are both full-time faculty members with appointments at Memorial Hermann Hospital. - C. O'Brien

## LOCAL TALENT FEATURED AT AES SEATTLE MEETING

**Sheila Kay Ferrendelli**, (see *Scoop* 2/8/02 issue) wife of **Dr. James A. Ferrendelli**, chairman, Neurology, and Dr. Kay Hieronymus, both former members of the Board of the Doctor's Orchestra, were featured at the annual American Epilepsy Society meeting in Seattle in December. Dr. Hieronymus conducted the award winning, world traveling Garfield Orchestra performance of Saint Saens' celebrated "Carnival of the Animals." Mrs. Ferrendelli and her duo pinao partner, Charles Tauber, were the soloists.



**Sheila Ferrendelli and Charles Tauber**

**FUNDING AVAILABLE** - The Research Committee of the American Diabetes Association, Houston/Southeast Texas area encourages students, fellows and established investigators to apply for funding, for grants ranging from \$400,000 - \$700,00 in funding locally. The local ADA deadlines are May 1 and November 1.

For more information, call **J. Ralston Creswell**, CAE, executive director, at 713-977-7706, ext. 6083. Applications are available on the Web at [www.diabetes.org/research](http://www.diabetes.org/research).

## ADVANCING MS PATIENT CARE AND RESEARCH AT UT-H

During a private reception Jan. 16, the Lone Star Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society presented \$48,000 toward the purchase of a 3 Tesla MRI magnet. It will enable UT-Houston physicians to detect brain abnormalities in patients suffering from multiple sclerosis and other neurological diseases, including Alzheimer's.

"It is exciting to see the cutting-edge multiple sclerosis research that is being done at the university," country music star **Clay Walker**, a multi-platinum recording artist, said. "As someone who is living with MS, I want to do everything I can to help researchers such as **Dr. Jerry Wolinsky** continue to work toward a cure."

**Dean Max Buja** thanked Walker for his time and commitment to the cause.

**Juanita Romans**, chief executive officer of Memorial Hermann Hospital, said it was truly an honor to partner with the Lone Star Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society and UT-Houston in this endeavor.

The new MRI, which will be housed at Memorial Hermann, can investigate the biochemistry of the brain and provide direct assessment of damage to the nerve cells. It also will be used for developmental research and novel imaging applications that cannot be explored with existing imagers at UT-Houston and the hospital.

Multiple sclerosis is an incurable, autoimmune disease. For information on how to help with fund-raising efforts for MS, call 713-500-5002.