



Scoop

April 2, 2004

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

Events to Know

April

3 Spring forward 1 hr.; Daylight Savings Time begins.

17 & 24 UT House Medics. Volunteer to lend a hand with a scraper, hammer and paint brush for elderly homeowners. Contact **Krysti Suarez**, 713-500-2241.

UTMost Interest

President James T. Willerson was quoted concerning the anonymous gift of \$25 million for stem cell research (*Houston Chronicle* 3-30-04).

NOTICE - The Webber Plaza entrance will reopen 6:30 a.m. Mon., **April 5**; the Ross Sterling entrance will close. Mid-morning Mon., **April 5**, the green elevators will reopen and the yellow elevators will shut down. Please park bikes at racks in Webber Plaza. Ross Sterling is a construction zone.

IN MEMORIAM - William S. Fields, M.D., was a pioneering Texas Medical Center neurologist who died in Houston March 21. He was the first chair of the Medical School's Department of Neurology, serving from 1974 until his retirement in 1982. His long list of accomplishments locally include securing seed money from Jesse Jones, *Houston Chronicle* owner and publisher, for the Texas Medical Center/Houston Academy of Medicine Library; and organizing neurological symposia held in Houston between 1955 and 1976.



Dr. William Fields

LEADERSHIP CHANGES IN RADIOLOGY AND INTERNAL MEDICINE

Two department chairs in the Medical School have announced their intentions to step down from their role as chair to return full-time to academic and clinical interests.



Dr. Susan John

Dr. Carl Sandler, chair of the Department of Radiology since 2001, has announced his resignation as chair, effective **April 15**. **Interim Dean Stanley Schultz** has appointed **Dr. Susan John**, vice chair of radiology and chief of pediatric radiology, term chair of the Department of Radiology, also effective **April 15**. John is the first female chair in the history of the Medical School.

Sandler will remain on the faculty, actively practicing and teaching radiology, and will return to directing radiology at LBJ General Hospital. **Dr. Larry Robinson**, currently vice chair and head of radiology at LBJ, will return to Memorial Hermann Children's Hospital to help with clinical pediatric radiology responsibilities.

Dr. Frank Arnett, who has served as chair of the Department of Internal Medicine since 2001, has announced his intention to resign the position **June 1**. He will remain on the faculty in the Division of Rheumatology, pursuing educational, research and clinical interests. Arnett has appointed **Dr. Bruce Kone**, division director of Renal Diseases and Hypertension, to a new position in the department. As executive vice chair, Kone will share administrative responsibilities with Arnett, effective immediately.



Dr. Bruce Kone

"I truly appreciate the contributions of Dr. Sandler and Dr. Arnett and am pleased that Dr. John and Dr. Kone have agreed to take on these added responsibilities," Dr. Schultz said.

SANCHEZ IS ENDOWED PROFESSOR IN FORENSIC PATHOLOGY

Dr. Luis Arturo Sanchez, clinical assistant professor, Pathology & Laboratory Medicine, was appointed to the Endowed Professorship in Forensic Pathology in the Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine.

Sanchez also holds faculty appointments with Baylor College of Medicine and George Washington University in Washington, D.C., and has been the chief medical examiner of Harris County since Jan. 1, 2003.

Said **Interim Dean Dr. Stanley Schultz**, "Dr. Sanchez is essentially the only individual in our midst who meets the endowment's criteria, one of which is to foster closer ties between the department and the Medical Examiner's Office, which Dr. Sanchez directs."

"I am deeply gratified by the trust The UT Medical School at Houston and Baylor have placed in me and the other doctors and scientists at the Harris County Medical Examiner's office. This appointment will further strengthen the HCME's bond with academia and foster the vital learning atmosphere critical to the success and development of our forensic laboratory," said Sanchez.

Sanchez received his medical degree from The University of Massachusetts.



Dr. Luis Sanchez



THE UNIVERSITY of TEXAS
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT HOUSTON
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Another WHI Study is Halted**THE QUEST FOR THE IDEAL HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY CONTINUES**

Two years ago, The Women's Health Initiative (WHI) cut short part of a study involving over 161,000 women with uteruses and the long-term use of a combination treatment including estrogen and progestin. The estrogen plus progestin trial was stopped after 5.6 years of follow-up because of an increased risk of breast cancer and because the risks – including coronary heart disease, stroke, and blood clots – outweighed the benefits of decreased cases of hip fracture and colorectal cancer.



Dr. Larry Gilstrap

Now the National Institutes of Health has asked the 11,000 Women's Health Initiative participants without uteruses in an estrogen-alone study to stop taking their study pills as well. Why?

“We had great hopes that the estrogen-alone study would be OK,” **Dr. Larry Gilstrap**, professor and Emma Sue Hightower chairman, Department of Obstetrics,

Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences, said. The estrogen-alone study involved women ages 50 to 79. The results are in. Though the incidence of stroke – eight women per 10,000 – is low, the NIH felt the risk was significant enough to stop the study. Hormone supplementation needs to be a short-term situation for moderate to severe menopausal symptoms.

Additionally, Gilstrap said, “There's also a worrisome trend between mental cognitive impairment, and/or probable dementia and the estrogen alone supplement.” Further information from the NIH will be forthcoming.

“Let me just say this. The Women's Health Initiative – that is, research on women's health issues – should have occurred 10 - 20 years ago,” Gilstrap said.”

“Recent WHI news concerning the effects of taking estrogen alone is important to take into consideration.” “The good news is that when women take HRT supplements, there is a decrease in colon

cancer and osteoporosis. The bad news is that at least, as discovered two years ago, taking combination estrogen and progesterone can increase a risk of heart disease, stroke, or breast cancer.”

It is now clear that estrogen replacement does not prevent heart disease but the good news is that estrogen alone did not appear to increase the risk as was shown in the first study, Gilstrap said. Moreover, estrogen alone was not reported to be associated with an increase in breast cancer.

What are some of the guidelines now for women? Although women are frustrated at hearing this advice as an answer to their question on hormone replacement, it is still important to check with your physician, Gilstrap said, adding “it's a case by case situation.” But the bottom line is – if you are on HRT, don't take hormones for longer than the minimum recommended time frame. Some recommendations include taking raloxifene or alendronate for osteoporosis. Calcium supplementation and exercise may also help in the prevention of osteoporosis. To be of benefit, exercise should be continued throughout one's life. “There are other medications for hot flashes,” Gilstrap said.

As pointed out recently by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, antidepressants such as the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) may provide some relief from vasomotor symptoms. Clonidine, a type of anti-hypertension medication, may also prove helpful in some cases.

Soy products and wild yam derivatives are on the market, although their efficacy has not been tested. Any medication should be discussed with your physician, Gilstrap said, as even herbal or alternative medicine can have deleterious interactions unprescribed and interacting with other prescribed drugs.

In addition to the trials of estrogen alone and estrogen plus progestin, other WHI trials are studying a low-fat eating pattern and calcium/Vitamin D supplementation.

Sponsors of the Women's Health Initiative include the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, the National Institute on Aging, the Office of Research on Women's Health, and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) in collaboration with the National Cancer Institute.

- C. O'Brien

COMMUNITY OUTREACH DAY, MARCH 20

Amy Sharkey, MS I, Outreach Day coordinator, (center, at left), and colleagues, at work.



First-year medical student class president **Chris Durham** says between 150 - 200 MS I students took part in beautifying Hermann Park March 20.



Springtime in Hermann Park; students find eggs during the project.



Trey Burrow, MS I plants a tree.