



Scoop

Aug. 6, 2004

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

Events to Know

August

10 Dr. Alan Schultz, speaker, "Functional Assessment of the Elderly," noon, MSB 2.103.

11 White Coat Ceremony, 6:30 p.m., TMC Edwin Hornberger Conference Center.

13, 14 Student Retreat, Camp Allen.

September

8 Leadership Summit. Invited faculty and staff focus on current issues, challenges, and opportunities, 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m., Crowne Plaza Hotel.

27 12th Annual UT Scholarship Golf Classic, 9 a.m., Redstone Golf Club.

October

6 Faculty Honors Convocation, 4 - 6 p.m., TMC Edwin Hornberger Conference Center.

UTMost Interest

President James T. Willerson was in the news (*Houston Chronicle*, 8/3/04) concerning the role of vulnerable plaque in heart attacks and a \$15.5 million, four-year grant studying predictors for plaque stability or instability...**Angela Hintzel**, a certified public accountant, was recently promoted from interim director of finance to director of finance.

FITNESS CENTER NEEDS YOU!

The Fitness Center offers low impact aerobics and abs, noon-1 p.m., **Mon., Wed., and Fri.**, and also offers cardio kick, 12:15-12:45 p.m., **Tues., Thurs.** Join up and get fit. Only \$25/month membership.

Call 713-500-5044. 146 members are signed up; 154 to go before **Aug. 31.**



PRACTICE PLAN POSTS \$2M PROFIT

The Practice Plan's \$2 million net profit for the last 10 months, ending June 30, 2004, represents positive news for our institution, **Kevin Dillon**, health science center executive vice president for finance and business affairs, informed the attendees of the Medical Service, Research and Development Plan (MSRDP) at their meeting July 28.

"At the same time last year, we were reporting a net loss of \$5.6 million," Dillon said. "There is reason for optimism, and we are seeing an increase in gross charges, RVU (relative value unit, a measure of physician "work") production and collections."

Per-Se Technologies, which started providing physician billing and collection services for the practice plan in February, has improved cash collections by 13 percent over the previous six months. "This is the first year of a multi-year contract with Per-Se, and we expect to see continued, steady improvement over several years. Meanwhile our physicians and personnel are also working to achieve steady increases over the next few years," Dillon said.

Dr. James Willerson, president of the health science center, informed the group that we plan to reward physicians and all UT employees here who have made this financial turnaround possible. "We are not inclined to across-the-board raises but instead will reward based on performance. This is quite a different financial picture than we have had here in years," he said.

The Medical School practice plan includes MSRDP and UT Physicians. MSRDP is the "trust fund" for the university's clinical services, and its board members are the Medical School's department chairmen and at-large members, who are elected by the faculty. UT Physicians is the business arm of the practice plan, managing its clinics and managed care contracts. - *D. Brown*



Just in time for the new school season, new study carrels in a spacious setting await students.

LRC MOVES INTO NEW SPACE

Aug. 2 was move-in day for the Learning Resource Center staff to their new permanent home, which is located across the Ross Sterling breezeway in the old cafeteria space. The new LRC is also accessible via the orange elevators and is badge-accessible 24 hours a day. All phone numbers have stayed the same.

The new space is 10,415 square feet, shaded in muted tones of grays with 150 study carrels and 75 computers. The LRC features wireless Internet capability, small-group study rooms, problem-based learning rooms, no-glare lighting for ease of computer use, a student workroom, the latest in security measures, and Herman Miller chairs.

"It was absolutely worth the wait," said **Karim Marani**, LRC director. "We had the luxury to design this space to our specifications and had input from students and faculty."

The study carrel area is sound-proofed and separated from a stand-up, "Starbucks" type of area
(*Cont'd. on back*)

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HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT HOUSTON
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McGraw-Wall Couples Surgical Skills with Mission in Antigua This Summer

For the past eight years, **Dr. Becky McGraw-Wall**, vice chair and associate professor, Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, has traveled with the staff of “Faith in Practice,” a local Houston organization, to do volunteer surgery at a mission in Antigua, Guatemala (see related story, *Scoop* 5/17/2002).



Dr. Becky McGraw-Wall

Antigua is a Central American village founded in the 16th century with Italian Renaissance influence. The town’s streets are covered in cobblestone; it’s located 5,000 feet above sea level, and nearby are the Agua and Fuego volcanic summits. Today there are at least 20 Indian groups in Guatemala, all direct descendants of the Maya.

Each summer, and for the next six months, the Obras Sociales Hermano Pedro Hospital and Orphanage, run by Padre Jose, is transformed into an active surgical center. Medical teams from America, Spain and Italy arrive to perform plastic, ear, nose and throat, orthopedic, gynecological, and general surgeries. The mission is a mutiservice center, housing the chronically ill, the mentally challenged, the elderly, and orphans. Renal surgery is being developed, and operating and post-op rooms are in the process of being built out.

McGraw-Wall performs cleft lip or cleft palette repairs on children, babies, and adults. She also does ear surgeries. “This past summer I did a number of ear surgeries,” she said. She explained that some of the children are born without ears. The symptom is called microtia, which occurs in one out of 6,000 births. McGraw-Wall starts the multistage task by using rib cartilage taken from the child’s chest. “I normally start operating when the child is about eight years of age,” the doctor said. “Basically, I’m sculpting an ear.” Afterwards, she said, families may express their gratitude with bunches of red roses or some other tokens of appreciation. She smiled. “Or they’ll come back and say in Spanish ‘Thank you. Thank you for my child’s little ear.’”

- C. O'Brien

LRC'S NEW PLACE, CONT'D.

where students can stand up at computers to check their e-mail, or sit and chat. There is a gallery area in which students can relax and study, and there are small study nooks positioned throughout the space.

“This facility is at the cutting edge of teaching and learning environments in top-tier medical schools,” Marani said. To further this, the staff is working closely with the faculty to enhance the collection of instructional resources, particularly Web-based media to complement the teaching and learning functions of the Medical School.

“Everyone is welcome to come by and take a look – we are so proud of our new home,” Marani added. A formal date for an open house and tour will be announced soon.

- D. Brown



Walter Humbird moves a skeleton model to its new home in the LRC.

JOIN THE AHA HEART WALK NOV. 6

Health Science Center researchers have received more than \$24 million in grants from the American Heart Association over the past 10 years. **Susanne Ellen**, senior coordinator, Special Events, said this is our chance to show our support for the AMA and its important work in the fight against heart disease and stroke.

Show your support and join the university, Sat., **Nov. 6**.

To become a Team Captain or to join a team, contact: <Patricia.M.Hendrix@uth.tmc.edu>, <John.A.McFate@uth.tmc.edu>, or <Jennifer.S.Lacy@uth.tmc.edu>.

Walk begins at 9 a.m. at Sam Houston Park.

A special breakfast for health science center participants begins at 7:30 a.m.

Contact **Susie Ellen** in the Office of Public Affairs for more information, 713-500-3617, <Susanne.B.Ellen@uth.tmc.edu>.

ENDOVASCULAR SURGEON JOINS MEDICAL SCHOOL FACULTY

Dr. Ali Azizzadeh has joined the faculty at the Medical School as the newest member in the Department of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery.

Azizzadeh, assistant professor in the Division of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery, also will serve as medical director of the vascular laboratory at Memorial Hermann Hospital.

The Baylor College of Medicine graduate recently completed a vascular surgery fellowship at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

Azizzadeh specializes in endovascular procedures to repair abdominal aortic aneurysms, peripheral vascular disease, blocked carotid arteries and venous disease.

He offers the latest techniques in cerebral protection for carotid stenting, using the Parodi Anti-Embolism System, a device that protects the brain from dislodged debris during the stenting process.

As part of his clinical research, Azizzadeh plans to work on the development of new devices for endovascular procedures.

- M. Raine



Dr. Ali Azizzadeh

SOFTBALL LEAGUE FORMING - Upcoming TMC Fall

Softball league team captain’s meeting will be 6 p.m., Wed. **Aug. 18**, at the Rec Center, 7779 Knight Road facility, classroom A. The league will consist of Co-ed and Men’s leagues. Co-ed will play on Mondays and Men’s on Tuesdays. The league will start on Mon., **Aug. 23** and will run approximately five weeks plus play-offs. For more information contact **Chucky Son** at 713-500-8422.