



# Scoop

July 9, 2004

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

## Events to Know

### July

**13 Benefits Brown Bag Session**, noon, MSB 2.006.

**15 TMC Food Drive Party**, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Webber Plaza. Donation boxes at guard's desk and green elevator, ground floor, Medical School. Virtual food drive Web site, <[http://www.uthouston.edu/community/food\\_drive/index.html](http://www.uthouston.edu/community/food_drive/index.html)>.

**26 President's Forum, President James T. Willerson** speaking, 11:30 a.m., MSB 2.135.

## UTMost Interest

**Dr. John Reveille**, Internal Medicine/Rheumatology, who was interviewed on KHOU-TV Channel 11, June 25 and

26, reported that new drugs like TNF blockers enable patients with ankylosing spondylitis to live normal lives on ...**Dr. Richard Yee**, Ophthalmology and Visual Science, demonstrated the difference between Lasik and Lasek methods used to correct the eye on KPRC-TV June 22...**Dr. Michael Altman**, Family Practice, warned of the danger of overhydration and sodium depletion to summertime athletes (*Houston Chronicle*, 6/24/04)...**Drs. Richard Andrassy** and **Craig Fisher**, Surgery, were interviewed on KTRK-TV June 28, explaining what everyone should know before having surgery.

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

A new Technology and Education Small Grants Program has been announced. The program's advisory team is calling for proposals; proposed deadline is Mon., **Aug. 15**.

For questions, contact: **Dr. Paula O'Neil**, 713-500-4292, or <[Paula.N.ONeil@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:Paula.N.ONeil@uth.tmc.edu)>.

## DISCOURSE ON THE STATE OF EMERGENCY ROOMS TODAY

**Dr. Brent King**, chair, Emergency Medicine, is a strong supporter of addressing the fundamental issues facing emergency medicine today. "I think we can build all of the community clinics that we like and the problem still can't be solved. What it boils down to is we have an aging population — and limited capacity."



**Dr. Brent King**

"The message is clear," King added. "We lack a coherent ER health policy — both locally and nationally. We're then left with a hodgepodge array of ER care. We really don't have a strategy of dealing with a complexity of issues in the ER, including overcrowding and underfunding."

How did we arrive at the situation we're in? Looking back, King said, in 1985, a federal COBRA EM law was passed, including a section titled "Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act" (EMTALA), making a medical screening examination a requirement for EM centers — but no funding was provided. All patients entering the ER would have to be examined. For more information on this federal mandate, see <<http://www.emedicine.com/emerg/topic860.htm>>.

In addition, said King, we probably don't have enough ER doctors to fulfill patients' needs.

The good news is that we've managed to address the management of the ER more efficiently, said King. But we can't control the inflow or the outflow process. "We need to radically rethink the delivery of health." The hospital of the future, said the EM chair, would have a relatively small inpatient area where the sickest of the sick go, and a really big emergency treatment area where a patient is managed on an outpatient basis, encompassing a walk-in clinic and a short stay area.

Another concern that King has is the ERs' responses to possible bioterrorism. "Right now we have no surge capacity. If we had to accept 100 intensive care patients, we would be overwhelmed. Outbreaks can happen; look at the West Nile virus in New York or the Hanta virus in New Mexico."

**Dr. Guy Clifton**, chair, Neurosurgery, and a co-founder of Save Our ERs, has another perspective. He says that many ER patients don't belong in the ER unit. Clifton said that as many as 50 percent of the patients, or as many as half a million, should be going to clinics or doctors' offices instead.

When ERs are overburdened with average cases, true emergencies go untreated at worst, threatening a patient's life, or delayed in treatment, because of long waits, at best.

Mayor Bill White of Houston has responded to a recent study, the Lewin Report, commissioned by Save Our ERs, by saying "It reinforces the idea that we need to get primary care patients out of emergency rooms and into the clinics."

The bottom line is that a public dialogue — with varying takes on the problems — has opened up on the nature of ERs today and the challenges they face.

- C. O'Brien



THE UNIVERSITY of TEXAS  
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT HOUSTON  
MEDICAL SCHOOL

Stanley Schultz, M.D., Interim Dean  
Darla Brown, Director  
e-mail: [M.Darla.Brown@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:M.Darla.Brown@uth.tmc.edu)  
Colleen O'Brien, Editor  
e-mail: [Colleen.L.O'Brien@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:Colleen.L.O'Brien@uth.tmc.edu)  
Phone: 713-500-5114; FAX: (713) 500-0597  
E-Scoop online:  
[http://www.med.uth.tmc.edu/community\\_affairs/escoop.htm](http://www.med.uth.tmc.edu/community_affairs/escoop.htm)  
Produced weekly by the Office of Community Affairs and Public Education



## DR. SUSAN JOHN APPOINTED JOHN S. DUNN

### DISTINGUISHED CHAIR

**Dr. Susan D. John**, professor of radiology and pediatrics and chair, Department of Radiology, has been appointed to the John S. Dunn Distinguished Chair in Radiology. John has been the chief of Pediatric Radiology since 1998 and assumed leadership of the department as term chair effective April 15 (see *Scoop* April 2, 2004). She is the first female chair in the history of the Medical School.

As an academic pediatric radiologist, John has focused on developing a strong pediatric imaging service and on teaching and advancing knowledge of diagnostic pediatric imaging.

Her primary research interests are in the use of imaging for diagnosis of children in the emergency and acute care setting. She has a strong background in pediatric ultrasound, with a special focus on acute gastrointestinal disease. She is a popular lecturer on pediatric musculoskeletal imaging. John is co-author of the text *Differential Diagnosis in Pediatric Radiology* and has authored numerous book chapters and review articles. She serves as an examiner for the American Board of Radiology and reviews manuscripts for many major radiologic journals.



Dr. Susan John

### LEADERS & TEAM CAPTAINS FORMING

The Medical School's American Heart Association's Heart Walk effort has two leaders in place for the upcoming event. They are: student leader **John McFate**, and faculty leader **Dr. S. Ward Casscells**. The UT Health Science Center is a \$15,000 Gold Sponsor for this year's event, Sat., **Nov. 6**, starting at 7:30 a.m. at Sam Houston Park, for a 5 mile walk/run.

All six schools are being issued a friendly challenge to compete - students versus staff and faculty, to see who can bring out the most walkers and who can raise the most dollars.

If you would like to sign up as a team captain, contact **Mark Thomas** in the Office of Public Affairs, 713-500-3258, or <Mark.A.Thomas@uth.tmc.edu>.

### PUSHING THE GENETICS ENVELOPE

Genotyping a person's DNA can be a complex business. There's the matter of collecting 3 billion unique DNA letters, for example.

**Dr. Eric Boerwinkle**, director, Human Genetics Center, UTHSC-Houston, has hope that genetics - for the long haul - will produce more accurate diagnoses in patient illnesses.

Boerwinkle recently was featured in the *Houston Chronicle* (July 4, 2004) on the subject.

Already a \$140 million study at UT-H of more than 40,000 patients with high blood pressure determined that diuretics was a cheaper but very effective alternative pharmacogenomic for that disease.

A pharmacogenomic - or personalized medicine - is a new field that will help with a doctor's knowledge of a patient's genotype. Being able to pinpoint the right medicine for the right person through knowing a patient's genotype will be available, experts predict, within five years. So far, geneticists have found the genes that contribute to stroke, premature heart attack, elevated cholesterol, hypertension, obesity, and diabetes.

### VASCULAR NEUROLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM WINS ACCREDITATION

The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education recently accredited the Medical School's vascular neurology training program. **Dr. James Grotta**, Neurology, program director, said that the program will look at possible new approaches to stroke treatment. Four fellows are involved in the training.

### DON'T FORGET - BRING IN THOSE FOOD DRIVE DONATIONS!

Next week, Thurs., **July 15**, is the annual TMC Food Drive, 11: a.m. - 1:30 p.m., Webber Plaza. Items to drop in the food boxes around the Medical School include: canned tuna, stews and pasta; peanut butter, canned fruits, applesauce, juice cans or boxes, canned veggies, tomatoes, tomato sauce, cereals, dry beans. Virtual Food Drive contributions are another way to give at <[http://www.uthouston.edu/community/food\\_drive/index.html](http://www.uthouston.edu/community/food_drive/index.html)>.



Erin Scott Williams, MS IV, donates some items to the cause.

### 31ST ANNUAL MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY/ANATOMY COURSE SEPT. 14

Baylor College of Medicine's 31st Annual Medical Terminology/Anatomy and Physiology Course - open to all medical students in the Texas Medical Center - begins 6-8:30 p.m., Tues., Sept. 14 through Nov. 9. All nine classes will be held in the Michael E. DeBakey Bldg., Rm. M-112. Those wishing to register can obtain forms by calling Dr. Robert E. Roush at 713-798-4611; FAX 713-794-7092; or e-mail <[rroush@bcm.tmc.edu](mailto:rroush@bcm.tmc.edu)>. You may also register online at <<http://www.hcoa.org/medterm>>.

The cost of the course on or before Sept. 10 is \$120, after which the fee rises to \$135. The required text, *The Language of Medicine, Seventh Edition*, by Davi-Ellen Chabner, W.B. Saunders Co., costs \$53 inclusive of tax and may be purchased at the first class (checks payable to Nancy Akery) or at the Baylor Bookstore. For those needing Baylor's Tax ID Number, it is 74-1613878.