



Scoop

Sept. 17, 2004

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

Events to Know

September

20 Dr. Jie Liang, "Motifs and Interactions in Alpha-Helical and Beta-Barrel Membrane Proteins," 11:45 a.m., MSB 2.135.

27 12th Annual Golf Classic. 7:30 a.m. registration. Benefits health science center student scholarships. Redstone Golf Club.

30 SECC Kickoff, 10 a.m., Leather Lounge.

October

4 Dean's Town Hall Meeting, noon - 1 p.m., MSB 3.001.

8 Founders' Fun Fest. 2 - 6 p.m., TMC Hornberger Conference Center.

MEDICAL SCHOOL MILESTONE: TOTAL GROUND FLOOR ACCESS

For the first time since Tropical Storm Allison hit in June 2001, faculty, staff, and students will have complete access to the ground floor of the Medical School Building next week. As of 8 a.m. Mon., **Sept. 20**, the School's entire ground floor will be returned to full operating condition, said **Claire Brunson**, director, Management Services.



Both the Fannin entrance and the Ross Sterling entrance, including the drop off lane, to the Medical School are also scheduled to be reopened Mon., **Sept. 20**. The Medical School's yellow elevators have been returned to full operating condition, including service to the ground floor, as of today. Stairwell A, NW corner, will remain closed. In addition, there are several office moves afoot. Finance and Administration has moved to MSB G.150; Admissions is moving to MSB G.420 as of Mon., **Sept. 20**; Student Affairs is moving to MSB G.400 on Tues., **Sept. 21**; and, Faculty Affairs is moving to MSB G.300 on Thurs., **Sept. 23**.

FIND OUT HOW THE FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT AFFECTS YOU

Organizers say that after this Brown Bag session, to be held at noon, Tues., **Oct. 12**, in MSB 3.001, you will walk away with a clearer understanding of a recent revision in the labor laws.

Michael J. Jimenez, vice president/chief human resources officer, and **Robyn Moore**, manager, compensation, will facilitate the discussion.

The session has been initiated due to provisions of the recently revised Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Effective Aug. 23, the FLSA now requires that all employees earning less than \$455 per week be paid overtime for actual hours worked in excess of 40 hours within a work week (whether the employee is in an exempt or non-exempt capacity).

The University Classified Staff Council is sponsoring this Brown Bag Case Round. The session is open to all health science center employees, free of charge. Light refreshments will be served.


NEW CENTER TO SPONSOR TEACHING COURSES, WORKSHOPS

Planned activities for the new John P. McGovern, M.D., Center for Health, Humanities, and the Human Spirit for the 2004-2005 year fall into two main categories: teaching and collaborative research conferences — serving the entire health science center. Plans for new teaching include a required "Introduction to Ethics & Professionalism" course for second-year Medical School students; an expansion of the Health and Human Spirit component for first-year Medical School students; and new electives in "Filmmaking and Health Care," as well as "Integrative Health Care: Theories & Practices."

In February 2005, the center will sponsor "Writing and Healing"— a nationally advertised workshop for health professionals. The School of Public Health and Rice University will offer a course in "Medicine, Meaning, and Morality" in the spring of 2005. In the fall of 2005, the center will offer "The Courage to Teach," a series of coordinated retreats for health science center faculty, using methods of the Center for Teacher Formation, sponsored by the Fetzer Institute.

Collaborative research conferences will include a conference co-sponsored with Baker Center at Rice, termed "Health Care: Resources and Rationing," as well as a conference co-sponsored with the ACGME, called "Health Care as Sacred Vocation." For more information about these activities contact **Shirley Pavlu**, 713-500-5970. (For a related article, "Q/A with Dr. Tom Cole," see back).

UTMost Interest

 **Dr. Ward Casscells**, vice president, biotechnology, recently was quoted concerning nanotechnology (*USA Today*, 9/12/04).

NOMINATIONS DUE FOR EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

Know an outstanding employee? Download a nomination form from the Medical School's homepage and send to **Alexis Basha**, JJL 400.



A donor waits his turn in the Leather Lounge.

BLOOD DRIVE UPDATE

The tally from the Medical School's blood drive Sept. 10 was 38 donors — which exceeded the goal, so it was a great success. Thanks to all those who gave, and those who tried to give!



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Q/A WITH DR. TOM COLE

Editor's note: The following is an interview with Dr. Thomas R. Cole, new director of the John P. McGovern, M.D., Center for Health, Humanities, and the Human Spirit - a health science center program based at the Medical School, which commenced Sept. 1. The McGovern Foundation recently funded the center with a \$3.5 million gift and created an endowed chair for its director, Cole. Cole, professor, Department of Family & Community Medicine, is author of the book "The Journey of Life: The Cultural History of Aging in America," and the film "Still Life: The Humanity of Anatomy."

Q: Why do the center's lectures need to be a part of the Medical School curriculum and a part of a well-rounded medical student's education today?

A: We're not starting from scratch. The leadership here is already in place. The work of the new Center for Health, Humanities, and Human Spirit is already under way, and has been for several years, through the efforts of faculty, including **Megan Cole, Rabbi Karff, Drs. Judianne Kellaway, Eugene Boisaubin, Laura-Colletti, Philip Orlander, Brent King, Stanley Reiser, Henry Strobel, Bryant Boutwell,** and many others. We are continuing the work they've already begun and will serve as the overall umbrella for their efforts and the efforts of others.

The idea behind the center is that good teaching requires the whole person to reach out in an integrative way.

What's newer about the center is the emphasis on formation – on molding or shaping students to continue being compassionate, confident, integrated human beings. It's very easy to become cynical after you've entered Medical School — to just get by and lose your inspiration.



Dr. Tom Cole

Q: What short-term goals do you, as director, envision for the new health science Center for Health, Humanities, and the Human Spirit?

A: Our short-term goals include launching our new required ethics course for second-year medical students; expanding our innovative

Health & Human Spirit teaching; and, developing some electives. I'm a filmmaker and want to offer an elective in filmmaking and medicine with my colleague, **Dr. Bill Howze,** at Baylor College of Medicine. Watching, interpreting, and making short films can help students tap the untold stories and explore emotional, moral, and spiritual issues that elude numbers, charts, and texts. Getting to the heart of things requires metaphor and story.

It also requires an act of imagination to step outside your own skin and imagine what it might be like to be sitting in that chair with an illness like diabetes or heart disease.

It's harder and harder to be empathetic. This is where the creative arts can be helpful in medicine. We'll also want students to be able to do "reader's theatre" based on medical cases, medical stories, and physician authors. We want to help people to learn to establish that bond of connection.

Q: What long-term goals do you envision for the center?

A: I want to develop a center known for its excellence in research and teaching. By hiring new faculty, generating new research and grants, I want to bring the medical humanities as an interdisciplinary field to prominence here at the health science center.

As an educator, my ultimate goal is to generate a quality of personal interaction and knowledge of the multicultural backgrounds of people and ethical issues, so that that empathy can be fully informed.

Q: The center is to be a collaborative effort. Who do you intend to collaborate with, both in terms of professors and institutions?

A: I want to enlist the help of colleagues from the University of Houston like **Professor Bill Monroe** in English and **Andrew Achenbaum** in history and gerontology. My colleagues will be instrumental in teaching our medical students literature and medicine, and geriatrics and gerontology, basically, the humanistic care of the elderly.

David Leach, the director of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), will be on campus in the fall of 2005 and will co-sponsor a conference for the health science center faculty with me. He supports training Residency Directors and faculty members in **Parker Palmer's** "Courage to Teach" method, and he believes in the importance of the human spirit in medical education.

The feelings we tend to find in the environment we work in today include burn out, lack of inspiration, stress, overwork, and depletion.

Our workshops will be geared toward helping teaching faculty recover the core of why they went into teaching in the first place and to help them create a community spirit that enables them to educate from their own integrated heart and mind.

Q: What have you learned from your experience as director of the Institute for the Medical Humanities graduate program at The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston?

A: I've learned that it's important to have graduate students who are committed to research in the humanities and ethics. Training them is important to the future of the field, and I want to bring that to this campus. I will be working with the graduate program in religious studies at Rice, where I'll have an appointment as a professor of humanities. I will be enlisting colleagues in religious studies, anthropology, and philosophy at Rice. I'm also eager to work with graduate students in the School of Public Health.

Q: Why is the concept – Health, Humanities, and the Human Spirit – important, especially today?

A: We now know that the most effective physicians are the ones who are not only technically competent, who know not only about the molecular, but who know about the ethical and spiritual, and who embody those traits in their own lives.

Q: Could we have had this kind of center, say, 30 to 50 years ago, in a Medical School, and what does that tell us about how medical schools have evolved?

A: We didn't have nearly as much scientific knowledge, so consequently, we couldn't do as much. But the human quality of the interactions – the level of trust – between physicians and patients – was much higher.

When you look at public polling data, the trust that people have in physicians has fallen in recent years. It's not because physicians are less trustworthy. It's because there are so many depersonalizing things that intrude on the doctor/patient relationship today. To name but a few: the intervention of technology, of third-party payers, of mountains of quantitative information. It distances. It's a bridgeable distance, but it puts a real distance between doctors and patients. **William Osler** anticipated these problems almost a century ago, which is why his legacy remains an important source of study and inspiration.

- Colleen O'Brien