



# Scoop

Feb. 11, 2005

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

## Events to Know

### February

**14 Employee Relations Council Valentine's Day Sale:** flowers, baked goods, 8 a.m., Leather Lounge.

**14 Megan Cole** performs in "Primary Care," a special performance, noon, MSB 2.006.

**17 Dr. James Morone**, "Sickness or Sin? How Morality & Religion Shape American Health Care," noon, MSB 2.006. **Lunch included.**

**17 Dr. Ward Casscells**, "Tsunami Disaster Relief Efforts and Influenza," noon, MSB 2.135.

## UTMost Interest

**Julie Page** is now acting DMO, Surgery...**Jeff Scott** has accepted the position as interim DMO of Cardiothoracic & Vascular Surgery and continues in his roles as DMO of Neurosurgery and Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation.

## NEWS FLASH

Records Management has the solution for a messy office. The Records Center at OCB has acquired additional space for records storage.

If you have paper creep attacking your office space, you can now ship those records safely and conveniently to OCB, for a nominal fee. Requirements are: records must be packed correctly in brown boxes, approximately 10.5" x 16" x 12;" be listed on the records retention schedule with an indication in the "Storage" column; and have at least one calendar year remaining in the total retention period.

Contact Records Management at 713-500-3100 for additional information.

## APAMSA RELIEF EFFORT

The Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association (APAMSA) has been collecting clothing for their Tsunami Relief effort in the Leather Lounge.



**Pediatrics resident Norma Perez** makes a donation.

## FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS: THE REACH OUT & READ PROGRAM

**Megan Cole**, an actress and our artist-in-residence, recently explained the importance of reading out loud during a Literature and Medicine Lecture. "Words feel differently in our mouths – they often feel like what they mean." As an example, the artist asked her class to say out loud the words "elate" and then "thud."



**Keith Grimwood** taught songwriting at an ROR benefit Saturday.

**Perri Klass, M.D.**, the national medical director for Reach Out & Read (ROR), who was recently on campus, would agree with the actress about the importance of reading out loud. In her talk "Early Literacy in Pediatric Primary Care: Reach Out & Read" last week, the Boston pediatrician emphasized that vocalizing children's stories, especially when parents read out loud to their children, engages the child's mental development on many levels – including cognitive, developmental, and emotional.

In 1988, Klass said her staff noticed that young patients were "stealing our waiting room books." Klass and her colleagues decided to dig beneath the surface of what was happening and discovered that the children were from families with few resources. They were hungry for books.

Klass and her team decided to set up a program whereby participating pediatricians give every child a book at each check-up from ages six months to five years. By the time the child is five, she will have about 10 books from her pediatrician alone.

Books given to the children are age-appropriate; for instance, infants receive board books, and 12-month-old children get books with lots of pictures and colors. "Somewhere after 36 months of age, the child who can recite parts of well-known stories from memory, begins to connect meaning to those swiggly little black things on the page," said Klass. Once a child reaches that moment, a milestone has been crossed, said the speaker, and a whole new world of reading – the joy of reading – has been discovered.

ROR is a national program that so far has distributed over 3 million books to over 2½ million children. The Texas ROR Program, housed in the Medical School's Department of Pediatrics under the direction of **Dr. Susan Cooley**, has distributed over 250,000 books to children along with a doctor's "prescription for daily reading."

Twenty-five percent of Americans read at the eighth-grade level or below, said Klass. Another twenty-five percent of Americans read at the fifth-grade level or below. Reading is important to health care professionals on several levels, she told the audience. People who read can understand medication instructions. Literacy leads to better health and well being.

You can view Klass's lecture on the ROR Texas Web site at <<http://www.uth.tmc.edu/rortx>>. To read further, visit <<http://www.reachoutandread.org>>. The local Reach Out and Read program is looking for new and gently used children's books. All languages are welcome. Contact **Irene Townsend** at 713-500-3678, or e-mail her at <[Irene.T.Townsend@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:Irene.T.Townsend@uth.tmc.edu)>. - C. O'Brien



**Dr. Susan Cooley** accepts a \$25,000 donation from Verizon Foundation.



THE UNIVERSITY of TEXAS

MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

A part of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

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## PRACTICE PLAN REPORTS POSITIVE NEWS, LOOKS TO CHALLENGES

Positive financial news and patient survey results set the tone for the annual meeting of the Medical Service, Research and Development Board (MSRDP) Jan. 25.

The Medical School practice plan ended fiscal year 2004 with a \$3 million net positive margin, collecting 7 percent more net patient revenue than in fiscal year 2003. This margin was achieved even after providing for some \$1.25 million of clinician productivity incentives.

Patient satisfaction surveys from UT Physician clinics were equally upbeat, boasting terrific marks – ranking physicians 100 percent “satisfactory” or “very satisfactory.”

“The surveys are true. I looked through the data myself, and it is very impressive. Everyone is doing a great job,” said **Dr. Michael McKinney**, chief operating officer of the UT Health Science Center.

**Dr. Richard Andrassy**, CEO of UT Physicians and executive vice president for clinical affairs, reported that patient volume at outreach offices had increased 3 percent in fiscal year 2004, while visits in the Texas Medical Center UT Physician offices had declined 2 percent.

Gross collections were up 12 percent in FY04, and charges were up 30 percent in the same time period as compared to fiscal year 2003, he added.

“Our challenges for the future include improving our payer mix; developing new revenue sources through ancillary services, joint ventures, and new programs; and increasing the public awareness of our UT faculty. Many of our physicians are better known around the world than in their own community,” Andrassy said.

**Kevin Dillon**, health science center executive vice president for finance and business affairs, reported that the actual revenue of the practice plan, MSRDP and UT Physicians combined, is down \$1.1 million through Dec. 31, 2004, but the financial outlook is still projected to post positive numbers by the end of the fiscal year.

**Andrew Casas**, assistant vice president of business affairs and clinical operations of UT Physicians, reported that UT Physicians is seeking \$1.1 million in a class-action lawsuit against the insurance provider CIGNA. The lawsuit is based primarily on allegations that HMO health plans (Humana, Aetna, CIGNA, Coventry, HealthNet, PacifiCare, United, Wellpoint, Prudential, and Anthem) violated the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) by engaging in fraud and extortion in a common scheme to wrongfully deny payment to physicians.

“We chose to refile every claim in question – and all of the settlement proceeds will be returned to the appropriate departments,” he said.

Regarding compliance, **Dr. Jeffrey Katz**, chair of the Compliance and Ethics Committee, reported that UT Physicians had signed a one-year contract with Per Se to provide physician reviews department by department, beginning in March.

“Compliance is of utmost importance to the practice plan and requires a dedicated, focused approach,” he said.

Andrassy and McKinney both stressed that all MSRDP meetings are now open to all faculty.

“Encourage others to take an interest in the business of MSRDP,” McKinney said.

The next MSRDP meeting is set for 4 p.m. **April 13**, MSB 2.103.

- D. Brown



**Richard F. Kammerer**

New gift of 5 \$20,000 scholarships

## SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AT THE MEDICAL SCHOOL IS IN GROWTH MODE

The **Vivian L. Smith Foundation** has generously donated a gift of \$100,000 toward scholarships for students at the Medical School. Five students entering the freshman class in August will be awarded \$20,000 over a four-year period.

“The Vivian L. Smith Foundation has made a significant contribution to our scholarship program by doubling the number of four-year scholarships offered and we are deeply grateful for their support,” said **Richard F. Kammerer**, executive director, Development and Alumni Affairs, Office of the Dean.

The cost of going to medical school is an enormous financial burden. Medical students incur a typical debt of \$80-100,000 by the time they graduate.

“For last year’s graduating class (2004), the average debt of the indebted students (which is about 85-90 percent of the class) for medical school (not including pre-med school educational debt) was \$91,172; it goes up every year,” said **Pat Caver**, director, Student Affairs.

The foundation, established by Vivian L. Smith, spouse of Houston oil and real estate icon R. E. “Bob” Smith, supports innovations of all kinds. Over the past eight years, the foundation has contributed widely to ground-breaking research and training programs at the health science center, as well as scholarship support.

## DASH RECEIVES \$14,000 MIKE HOGG FUND GIFT

Faculty professor **Pramod Dash, Ph.D.**, Neurobiology & Anatomy, recently received a \$14,000 gift from the Mike Hogg Fund to further his research. The gift was facilitated by **Pam Speer Lewis**, associate director, Development, Medical School.

Dash’s work involves the mechanisms of memory formation and dysfunction. The long-term goal of his research is to identify the scientific means to alleviate memory disorders associated with central nervous system disease and injury.



**Dr. Pramod Dash**

Established in 1955 by Alice Nicholson Hanszen in memory of her first husband, the Mike Hogg Fund is dedicated to supporting medical research, education, medicine, and hospital care within the state of Texas.

## ALUMNI REUNION WEEKEND IS APRIL 15-16

Reunion classes of 1973, '74, '75, '80, '85, '90, and '95 - save the dates, **April 15 & 16**. Activities planned include a reception and a dinner on April 15. Faculty and alumni scholarship recipients will be in attendance to reconnect with classmates, colleagues, and future physicians. Tours and a picnic are scheduled for April 16.

For a schedule of events and registration information, visit <<http://www.med.uth.tmc.edu/alumni/index.htm>>.