Scoop

Jan. 14, 2005

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

Events to Know

January

19 **Dean's Lecturer, C. David Allis, Ph.D.**, "Beyond the Double Helix: Writing and Reading the Histone Code," 4 p.m. MSB 3.001.

19 "**Discover Your Health**" **Wellness Fair**, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., MSB 8th floor/Penthouse.

21 **Grant Taylor Lecturer Dr. Marilyn Gaston** to address the issue of low-income and uninsured Americans and health care, noon, JJL 3rd floor auditorium. Lunch for first 200 attendees.

UTMost Interest

Dr. Bryant Boutwell, associate dean, Community Affairs,was an invited speaker for the UT Dental Branch's 100 Anniversary Celebration on Jan. 3. His talk highlighted the early history of the Texas Dental College and its integration into the UT System along with its many contributions to dental education and the development of the Texas Medical Center. Throughout 2005, our Dental Branch celebrates its history as Houston's oldest institution of higher education, 1905 – 2005.

CORRECTION

The **Jan. 18** meeting to determine the status of the berm project inWebber Plaza will be conducted by the Houston Academy of Medicine Executive Board.

BURN-OUT CENTER RESCUE

Several nights during exams, from Dec. 9 through Dec. 16, first- and second-year medical students were furnished some homestyle cooking by The Organization of Parents and Friends.

JFB READIES FOR ABATEMENT, DECONSTRUCTION

After two months of moving, the emptying of the John Freeman Building of occupants is nearly complete.

"The reason for the delay is that a lot of renovations had to be done to accommodate the moves from the John Freeman Building. We are doing everything possible so that the people who are moved can seamlessly continue with their work in their new space," **Dean Stanley Schultz** said.

"The move has not been easy for faculty and staff members, but we have lots of people willing to help make it as painless as possible," said **Claire Brunson**, director of management services. "Our team, including **Tony Lentola, Gerard Marchand, Julie Broussard, Pete Martinez, Jim Quimby, Walter Humbird, Faye Gould, James Young,** and **Kirk Countryman** are doing a super job with keeping the project on target. **Valerie Buchanan** and **Ted Jones** with Conference Operations have been working diligently to reschedule classroom activities in different rooms, and we appreciate all departments who relinquished control of their conference rooms and classrooms temporarily to help keep our academic mission going."

The abatement of asbestos in the John Freeman Building is projected to start after all of the occupants are out – the week of **Jan. 18**. Deconstruction will follow.

On **Jan. 7**, the doors connecting the Medical School Building to the John Freeman Building were closed off, but the building will remain open as long as occupants are still there.

"Vaughn Construction is occupying the building with a minimum of disruption to the remaining second-floor occupants," said **Jim Victor**, manager of Project Management and Engineering Services."Some limited deconstruction and relocation of ceiling tiles, doors, frames, etc., will start on the ground floor to make the building ready over the next two weeks."

Deconstruction of the JFB is targeted to be completed at the end of March and the foundation work for the new Replacement Research Facility will immediately follow at the start of April, Victor added.

- D. Brown

DR. WILLIAM DOWHAN GARNERS PRESTIGIOUS LIPID AWARD

Dr. William Dowhan, John. S. Dunn Professor of Biochemistry, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, as well as faculty member, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, will receive the prestigious American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Avanti Award in Lipids in San Diego this coming April. Dowhan will be the sixth recipient of the $3,000 award.

Dowhan came from Harvard to join the Medical School faculty 32 years ago. His research over the years has pushed the envelope in our understanding of the molecular basis of cell processes and the unrecognized roles lipids play in those processes. "Probably the major part of this award comes out of the results we got using mutant strains of bacteria and yeast to define the role of lipids in specific cellular processes." *(Cont'd. on back)*

Dean Stanley Schultz congratulates Dr. William Dowhan.

The University of Texas Medical School at Houston

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

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DOWHAN'S LIPID AWARD, CONT'D.

The specific lipids that Dowhan works with are phospholipids, as opposed to fatty acids, cholesterol, or triglycerides. Phospholipids are different because they have a charged portion and a fat portion. Because of that property, they form a structure, which defines a cell membrane.

According to Dowhan, scientists found out back in the '70s and '80s that phospholipids were also involved as metabolic regulators. They synchronized various processes in the cell.

"Through our work, we now know that individual phospholipid molecules are integral parts of various important cellular processes, like the replication of DNA, cell division, assembly of proteins, how proteins function, and how proteins fold into a proper three-dimensional structure that defines their function. If proteins don't fold properly, they aren't functional," he said.

The researcher reported that there are a number of diseases that are the result of proteins misfolding, including cystic fibrosis, mad cow disease, and Alzheimer's disease. "The dysfunctional proteins in these diseases are membrane proteins. The fact that we know that specific lipids are involved in the folding of membrane proteins may give us clues to the cure of these types of diseases," Dowhan said.

- C. O'Brien

PRACTICE PLAN ENDS FY04 WITH A $3M PROFIT

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.

"Fiscal year '04 was a good year for us and created a stronger financial picture for the entire health science center," said **Kevin Dillon**, health science center executive vice president for finance and business affairs, at the Medical Service, Research and Development Plan (MSRDP) Board of Directors meeting Dec. 21.

Dillon attributed the good financial news to a slight improvement in "collections per RVU" (relative value units are a standard measure of physicians' work), despite a small erosion in the practice plan's payor mix. Also, improved expense management and professional liability insurance rebates played a significant role in the positive financial results.

"The charges for the present fiscal year (year-to-date, FY 2005) are a little lower so far," he added. "But with our collections averaging $9 million a month through November, we are on target to meet our budget."

A new imaging solution being implemented by Per Se Technologies, the practice plan's outsource billing and collections company, will allow physicians and staff to view patients' explanations of benefits (EOB) so they can see what they are being paid for by service and compare this to contracted rates.

"This will be very helpful for physicians to keep track of their billable services," said **Dr. Brent King**, chair of the billing operations committee.

Dr. Richard Andrassy, executive vice president for clinical affairs and associate dean for clinical affairs, announced that he would also serve as the CEO and president of UT Physicians, which was formerly held by **William Paddock** during FY 2004.

"We are opening up all quarterly MSRDP meetings to all faculty so that everyone can come and hear what is going on with the clinical practice plan," Andrassy said.

The next MSRDP meeting is the annual meeting: 4 - 6 p.m. Wed., **Jan. 26** in MSB 2.103.

- D. Brown

(L. to R.) Karen Jacques-Palaz, Melinee Harris, and Dr. K. U. Singh, Infectious Diseases, discuss moving to MSB 7.143, 7.135 and 5.161.

MEDICAL SCHOOL SHUFFLE

The following offices are in new space due to the evacuation of the John Freeman Building, which will be deconstructed and replaced with a six-story Replacement Research Facility. Underlined room numbers are main offices:

Otolaryngology academic offices: UT Professional Building, Suite 1200

CV Surgery academic offices: UT Professional Building, Suite 425

Internal Medicine Infectious Diseases HIV Research Group: MSB 6.112, 6.119, 6.029

Dermatology academic offices: Houston Medical Center, Suite 980

Dermatology research offices: 1.176, 1.178; labs: 1.308

Pediatric Infectious Diseases Offices: MSB 6.132, 6.132A, 6.132B, 6.134B, 3.208; labs: MSB 3.002, 3.318

Internal Medicine Medical Genetics Offices: MSB 4.202, 4.202A, 4.202B, 4.040, 4.042, 4.044, 6.001, 6.003, 6.045; labs: MSB 6.005, 6.007, 6.011, .6.015, 6.031

Neurosurgery (Dr. Raymond Grill) Office: MSB 4.206; labs: 4.034, 4.036, 4.038, 4.312

Neurosurgery (Dr. Rong Yu) Office: lab: MSB 5.402

Neurobiology and Anatomy (Dr. Pramod Dash): MSB 5.506, 5.514, 5.534, 5.155

Internal Medicine Infectious Diseases: labs: MSB 7.121, 7.133, 7.135, 7.143, 7.149,7.502, 7.506, 7.515, 5.161, 5.163; offices: MSB 2.112, MSB 5.202, MSB 5.206, MSB 7.134, 7.136, 7.138

Graphic Communications Group: MSB G.500 (ground floor behind guard's desk)

UT Bookstore: ground floor in Leather Lounge across from G.100, Office: G.510

Copy Services: MSB B.210 (basement around the corner from the yellow elevators)

Statewide Preceptorship Program: JJL 454

HSC Human Resources (Geoff Ferguson): JJL S100

Microbiology Offices: MSB 1.171, 1.174, 1.180, 1.186, 1.188, 1.190, 1.192, 1.194, 1.196, 1.200, 1.204, 1.206, 1.208, 1.209, 1.210, 1.212, 1.500

Microbiology Labs: 1.000, 1.004, 1.402-1.408, 1.410-1.430, 1.414, 1.614, 1.618-1.626, 1.620, 1.616, 1.400, 1.428

Internal Medicine Cardiology Offices: MSB 1.214, 1.218, 1.220, 1,222, 1.224, 1.228

Internal Medicine Pulmonary: MSB 1.268, MSB 1.270, JJL S100

Center for Laboratory Animal Medicine and Care Offices: MSB 1.245

Internal Medicine Cardiology Center for Cardiovascular Biology & Atherosclerosis Research Offices: Denton A. Cooley Bldg. C964B, C950C, C950F, C900D; Labs: DAC C956, C956A, C956B, C962, C954, C954A, C970B, C970C