



Scoop

July 15, 2005

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

Events to Know

July

15 Faculty Registration Form for Student Retreat Due. \$120 fee. Aug. 12-13 event. Information, mary.m.ara@uth.tmc.edu

20 Employee Benefits Informational Session. Noon, HCPC Auditorium.

27 MSRDP Board Meeting. 4-6 p.m. MSB 2.103. All clinical faculty invited to attend.

27 2005 Primary Care Leadership Training Program. Dr. Joycelyn Elders, former U.S. surgeon general, to speak. 10 a.m., Dental Branch, Rm. 207. Details: www.db.uth.tmc.edu

UTMost Interest

Dr. Virginia Moyer, Pediatrics, was quoted in a Seattle television report about using BMI to identify children with weight problems.

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN:

In response to a significant increase in membership, the decision has been made to keep the Medical School Fitness Center open for the next academic year. But, because the center is still not self-supporting, I urge those of you who are not members to join and to encourage your acquaintances to do likewise.

Please join me in thanking **Charles Figari**, director of Auxiliary Enterprises, and his staff, and the Health Science Center administration for making this possible.



MEDICAL SCHOOL UNVEILS WEATHERHEAD, SMITH CENTERS

On June 16, **K. Lance Gould, M.D.**, director of the Weatherhead PET Center for Preventing and Reversing Atherosclerosis at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston, along with faculty, staff, and friends, assembled on the ground floor of Hermann Pavilion at Memorial Hermann Hospital for a reception to celebrate the opening of the Weatherhead PET Center for Preventing and Reversing Atherosclerosis and the new Lester Smith Cardiovascular Training Center.

Gould took guests on a tour of the expanded Weatherhead PET Center. Following the tour, he gave an overview of the center's 27-year history, citing medical advances that led up to the current non-invasive treatment program. He recalled the devastation of Tropical Storm Allison, which nearly destroyed the center in June 2001. The center's cyclotron was ruined, but the positron emission tomography (PET) scanner, medical records, and database were saved.

"We had just purchased and tested a second-generation PET scanner. And then it rained. The cyclotron building was completely flooded. Every single room was destroyed, even the roof,"

(Cont'd. on back)



From left, Lester and Sue Smith, Dr. K. Lance Gould, and Celia and Al J. Weatherhead celebrate the grand opening of two centers dedicated to improving heart health.

DRAGOI RECEIVES MCDONNELL FOUNDATION AWARD

Dr. Valentin Dragoi, assistant professor of neurobiology and anatomy and a 2004 Pew Scholar, has received a five-year, \$452,000 award from the James S. McDonnell Foundation -- one of just four granted this year.

The grant recognizes Dragoi and his innovative studies regarding how the visual cortex processes and updates information. Explains Dragoi, "The brain is never at rest, even when we close our eyes. We want to understand what happens in the brain in the absence of stimulation with a specific interest in the visual cortex, that brain region that allows us to perceive the world."

The recently developed technique of multiple electrode electrophysiological recording in animal models has made possible experiments addressing the relationship between neuronal internal states and behavioral performance. Dragoi and his research team accomplish this by recording the activity of multiple neurons in the brains of alert laboratory animals as they perform specific behavioral tasks. They compare these findings with human psychophysics and computer models to

(Cont'd. on back)



Dr. Dragoi



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HCHD GOES HIGH-TECH WITH EMR

The Harris County Hospital District medical staff is changing the way they record the care they deliver. The use of a computer program will soon allow all HCHD clinicians to spend more time with patients and less time chasing paper charts.

The program is EPIC, an electronic medical record (EMR) system that will track all medical records electronically. By August, all outpatient exam rooms will be outfitted with EPIC computer equipment.

Physicians, nurses, and health information management workers have been training to use EPIC's software. After the successful pilot program of EPIC at Gulfgate Health Center, EPIC is being pushed to other health centers and outpatient areas.

"Before the EPIC Base EMR project, doctors relied on an elaborate paper trail for results when they ordered diagnostic tests," said **Dr. John Riggs**, medical director of Clinical Information Systems. "Now doctors can check their 'in-basket' for the lab and radiology test results."

Online results include lab results, radiology, outpatient pharmacy, mammograms, history, physical and discharge summaries. "Physicians are receiving lab results sooner, and that allows them to respond to abnormal results faster," Riggs said.

Beyond the current base EMR, a second tier of EPIC software – which allows outpatient doctors to write notes and orders in the computer – will pilot this winter and roll out in all outpatient facilities next year.

After all outpatient locations are using the software, installation of EPIC for inpatient records will begin, Riggs said.

The HCHD Epic system can be accessed remotely via the Internet if the physician/student has an Epic UserID. For password information, call the HCHD Help Desk, 713-566-4357.

-Beth Gullett

Dragoi award, cont'd.

determine patterns of neural activity relevant to visual behavior. Preliminary data from Dragoi's lab suggests the intriguing possibility that in order to correctly discriminate a stimulus, neuronal networks have to be in specific states representing levels of network "preparedness."

The practical applications of understanding the brain's internal state and cortical processing related to visual processing include the prospect of one day developing a virtual reality-type of sight for the blind and for those who experience low vision, notes Dragoi. While his work focuses on the visual cortex, findings may very likely hold value for other sensory functions in the brain and higher cortical functions.

A native of Romania, Dragoi received his bachelors' degree in computer science in 1989 in Romania and earned a Ph.D. from Duke University in 1997. During postgraduate work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he began his novel work in visual cortex processing. In 2003, he joined the Medical School's Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy.

Founded in 1950 by aerospace pioneer **James S. McDonnell**, the private foundation bearing his name was established to improve the quality of life through its support of research and scholarship. Since its inception, the McDonnell Foundation has awarded over \$295.4 million in grants.

Gould, cont'd.

said Gould. "Then the waters went down, and we started over. We've literally come out from under the water and are looking up to the sky."

The Weatherhead PET Center relocated from Jones Pavilion to its current 6,000-square-foot facility earlier this year. The center is home to the latest PET scanner, a combination PET/CT scanner, and better analytical software. The Lester Smith Cardiovascular Training Center will serve as a training ground for physicians to learn about PET imaging and preventing and reversing atherosclerosis.

In 2002, Gould and the Weatherhead PET Center launched the Healing Hearts campaign to fund new generation PET and CT scanners with specialized software and a clinical research program. The campaign was fueled with a \$4 million gift from The Weatherhead Foundation and a \$1 million gift from the Lester and Sue Smith Foundation. With additional support from the philanthropic community, the campaign exceeded its \$11 million goal in 2003.

"We are deeply grateful to **Al Weatherhead** and **Lester Smith**," Gould said. "I will dedicate the next decade of my life to refining the technology and treatment for preventing and reversing coronary heart disease."

PET namesake Al Weatherhead III, president of Cleveland-based Weatherhead Industries, and his wife Celia, helped establish the Weatherhead PET Center in 1999. Their generous gift helped create a distinguished chair in heart disease and expand the imaging and treatment capabilities of the PET Center.

After suffering a heart attack in 1989, Weatherhead was determined not to have another one. As a patient of Gould's for the past 14 years, he continues to support Gould's innovative approach to managing heart disease. He expressed his thanks to Gould for the life-saving treatment program.

"To be able to treat heart disease non-invasively is a great gift," Weatherhead said. "I am proud to be a part of what you are doing as we walk together into the future. The rest of the world will follow behind us."

Gould expressed his appreciation of the Medical School's partnership with Memorial Hermann Hospital to **Steve Allen, M.D.**, CEO of Memorial Hermann Children's Hospital. He also thanked architects **Richard Palumbo** and **Steve Curry** of Curry Boudreaux Architects, designers of the facility, for making the center attractive and functional.

In his closing remarks, Gould expressed his thanks for his nine-member staff and their teamwork. The center's staff worked out of Gould's home until Memorial Hermann Hospital reopened in July after the flood. Center staff includes cardiologist **Stefano Sdringola, M.D.**, assistant professor of medicine; registered nurses **Mary Jane Hess**, **Mary Haynie**, and **Karen Alloway**; executive assistant **Susan Hood**; business director **Ro Edens**; senior staff assistant **Darla Hicks**; registered technician **Dilip Patel**; and database manager **Rick Kirkeide, Ph.D.**

"It's people that make it work," Gould said.

-J. Preston

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