Oct. 20, 2006

scoop

THE UNIVERSITY of TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL at HOUSTON

Events to Know

October

23 Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Seminar: Dr. Francisco Asturias (The Scripps Research Institute) to present "Structural Studies of Eukaryotic Transcription." Noon, MSB 2.135.

25 "Effective Communication," an HR-Training and Development course. 9-11 a.m., MSB B.605.

26 Microbiology and Molecular Genetics Seminar: Dr. Vishy Iyer (The University of Texas at Austin) to present "Genome-wide transcriptional regulatory networks and mechanisms in yeast and human cells." 4-5 p.m., MSB 2.103.

UTMost Interest

Dr. Marilyn Edwards, associate professor of internal medicine, was one of 12 advisers of the Aspen Institute's Health, Biomedical Science and Society Initiative who met in Aspen, Colo., in August to plan the Aspen Institute's Nutrition Summit for 2007 and 2008.

Dr. Barry Kahan, professor of surgery and division director of immunology and organ transplantation, was presented with an honorary doctorate degree at The Medical University of Warsaw in Poland June 22. Kahan was honored for his development of immunosuppressant agents and for innovations in the biology of transplant tolerance. He gave an acceptance speech titled "Academic Surgery: No Longer an Oxymoron."

(L-R): Drs. Marek Krawczyk, Kahan, and Leszek Paczek

Employees learn to make a difference through SECC

University employees learned how they could help others with a commitment to *Making a World of Difference* – the theme for this year's State Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC) that officially kicked off Oct. 12 in the atrium of the new Fayez S. Sarofim Research Building of the Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases (IMM).

Employees learned how local charities help the community at the SECC kickoff.

The SECC is an annual workplace giving campaign offering state employees the benefits of donating to their favorite charities, through one-time gifts or the convenience of payroll deduction. From Oct. 12-31, state employees will be encouraged to participate in the campaign and help those in need.

Dr. C. Gwin Morris, master of ceremonies for the SECC kickoff, said the campaign offers employees a chance to demonstrate their service and commitment to those less fortunate every day.

"The SECC is a way to pool our money to do significant and amazing things," said Morris, who is also the interim vice president of institutional advancement. "It enables us to make a philanthropic statement – *UT-Houston cares and UT-Houston shares*."

Dr. Michael Bungo, vice dean for clinical affairs, found a connection between participating in the campaign and the way the university pulled together as a team last year to help thousands of Hurricane Katrina evacuees.

"This is an opportunity to do that again," Bungo said, referring to the SECC. "I know what we have done, and I know what we are capable of doing."

The campaign is a great way for employees to give back to the community.

(Cont'd. on back)

Adenosine study offers hope to those with lung diseases

Adenosine has been shown to be an important signaling molecule involved in the development of chronic lung diseases like asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and pulmonary fibrosis. These diseases can severely affect a person's quality of life. **Dr. Michael Blackburn**, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, and his colleagues were the first to show that blocking the pathway of adenosine with a drug helped to alleviate symptoms of chronic lung diseases, while offering help and hope to those struggling to breathe.

Dr. Michael Blackburn

The study, "Role of A2B adenosine receptor signaling in adenosine-dependent pulmonary inflammation and injury," was published in the August issue of the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*.

From earlier research, Blackburn already knew that adenosine played an important role in the progression of chronic lung ailments.

"Several years ago, we generated genetically modified mice that developed chronic lung disease in response to elevations in the signaling molecule adenosine," Blackburn said. "With this animal model in hand, we set out to identify the specific signaling pathways responsible for adenosine-mediated pulmonary inflammation and damage. Our approach was to use our mouse model of adenosine dependent lung disease to uncover pathways and identify drugs that will target these pathways."

Inflammation of the lungs is one of the features of chronic lung diseases. "The degree of inflammation correlates with the severity of the disease," Blackburn said. "It is likely that the development of drugs that can control pulmonary inflammation will be useful in the treatment of chronic lung diseases."

(Cont'd. on back)

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

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What to do in a fire drill

Conducting fire drills and knowing evacuation routes are the best indicators that a real emergency will go smoothly and successfully. For this reason, the university's Environmental Health and Safety office compiled a list of the most commonly asked questions and answers regarding fire drill procedures.

Why are fire drills performed?
Fire drills are performed to ensure that personnel are trained in a safe, orderly evacuation and to prevent panic. The primary reasons for a fire drill are to maintain order and control. Speed in emptying buildings, while desirable, should be made secondary to the maintenance of proper order and discipline.

When the fire alarm sounds, what should occupants do?
In a high-rise building (any building over 75 feet), individuals are to proceed to the nearest stairwell exit and await further instructions via the public address system. However, individuals who see smoke or fire or feel threatened should evacuate the building. In a low-rise building, individuals are to evacuate the building.

What if occupants are involved in a patient procedure when the alarm sounds?
Occupants who are in the middle of a patient procedure when the alarm is initiated should continue with the procedure. However, a representative should go to the stairwell and listen for further instructions and report back. If the call to evacuate is made, the procedure should be stabilized and stopped, and all parties are to evacuate in a timely manner.

How should occupants help mobility-impaired individuals, if a building evacuation is necessary?
If a building evacuation is necessary, mobility-impaired individuals should be moved into stairwell landings but out of the way of others going down the stairwell to exit. Stairwells are protected with a two-hour rating for smoke and fire. Notify emergency responders of the location of any mobility-impaired individuals. First responders evacuate all personnel before fighting the fire.

Can occupants use the elevator to evacuate the building?
Never use the elevator during a fire drill or other alarm event. Stairs are the safest means of evacuation.

Adenosine study, cont'd.

With that in mind, Blackburn and his colleagues collaborated with CV Therapeutics, Inc. (CVT), a biopharmaceutical company in California, to test their theory. CVT already had developed a promising drug, CVT-6883, that blocks an adenosine pathway called A2B adenosine receptor or A2BAR.

"We used this drug to treat our mouse models with lung disease and found that, by blocking the A2BAR, we could improve features of chronic lung disease," Blackburn said. "This included preventing pulmonary inflammation, pulmonary fibrosis, and destruction of the alveolar airways, which is commonly known as emphysema."

Blackburn's findings have proved to be an important step toward the treatment of asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and pulmonary fibrosis. Based on this work, CV Therapeutics has initiated clinical trials to investigate the efficacy of the drug in the treatment of these chronic lung diseases.

-C. Webb

HAM-TMC Library welcomes Medical School

The Houston Academy of Medicine – Texas Medical Center (HAM-TMC) Library extends a warm welcome to all new faculty, residents, interns, fellows, and students from the Medical School. Whether you are a new student or are starting another year, the HAM-TMC Library has much to offer. The library is dedicated to providing excellent collections and services in support of the research, education, and clinical care programs of the Medical School, TMC, and the Houston area.

Located in the Jesse H. Jones Library Building at 1133 John Freeman Boulevard, the library is open daily from 7 a.m.-midnight Monday-Thursday, 7 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, and 1-10 p.m. Sunday.

Library collections are available in print and/or electronic formats, currently providing access to 8,000+ full text e-journals, a large collection of current and archived print journals, 192 databases, 980 e-books, 133,969 print books, and more than 3,000 audiovisual items.

Electronic access is available from library computers, and according to your level of authorization, from other TMC institutions from home or abroad.

Other services available at the HAM-TMC Library include circulation and information desks, photocopy and/or interlibrary loan requests, wireless access, library cards, and study rooms.

To read more about the services available at the HAM-TMC Library, check out the library's newly redesigned Web site at http://resource.library.tmc.edu/, which launched Oct. 2.

Book signing, Oct. 26

Author **Michael Reiman** will be on hand at noon Thursday, Oct. 26 in lecture hall 3.001 of the Medical School Building to discuss and sign copies of his book, *Financial Fund of Knowledge*. Faculty, staff, and students are invited to attend the book signing and lecture, which includes lunch for the first 150 attendees.

SECC, cont'd.

"I can't encourage you enough to really show your support and give a big thank you to the community," said **Dr. Catherine Flaitz**, dean of the Dental Branch.

SECC participants have a wide range of charities and causes to support, which include local, statewide, national, and international groups.

"This campaign offers us an opportunity to give to whatever causes we want," said **Dr. Irma Gigli**, deputy director of the IMM.

At the kickoff, representatives from a few local charities, including the Houston Symphony, United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast, Casa De Esperanza De Los Ninos, Crisis Intervention of Houston, Black United Fund of Texas, and Citizens for Animal Protection were available to answer questions from employees and provide information.

Dr. George Stancel, dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, encouraged employees to "put a personal touch" on their gift and really see the value in how they can make a difference in the lives of others.

Last year, the health science center raised more than $185,000 for local and statewide charities in Texas with 26 percent participation from employees. The 2006 SECC goal is $190,000. For more information about the campaign, visit the 2006 SECC Web site at www.uth.tmc.edu/2006secc/.

-C. Webb