Francisco González-Scarano, MD

The New Dean Engages

A New Era of Research
The School of Medicine’s Role in the South Texas Research Facility (STRF)

The STRF Big Six
The Six Core Research Programs

Becoming a Researcher:
Students in the Lab
A message from the Dean

Welcome to 2011 and the latest issue of FUTURE magazine.

Our School boasts a long history of research that has changed the face of medicine on a broad scope that it is often difficult to convey. Everyone knows the story of Julio Palmaz and the expandable coronary stents that are now implanted at the rate of approximately one million per year. It is estimated that 60,000 people a year receive an artificial shoulder based on Charles Rockwood’s design. Less known are the development of processes, procedures and drugs that are an ongoing matter of fact here at the School – like sliver-coating endotracheal tubes to reduce pneumonia risk or a newly-approved medicine that can stop drug-resistant chronic myeloid leukemia. Our School, and more importantly, our faculty have played and continue to play significant roles in these and other extraordinary medical achievements. That brings us to the focus of this issue of FUTURE – our expanding research mission and the integral role our faculty play.

The South Texas Research Facility (STRF) is much more than just an expansion of the Health Science Center’s real estate footprint. It represents a response to the need for more laboratory space, as well as a showcase for the future of biomedical research which will be performed by integrated disciplines rather than academic departments. The building is only three stories high yet nearly a quarter of a mile long, a design that promotes conversation and collaboration, since microbiologists, geneticists, oncologists and infectious disease researchers working on the same or similar projects can be closer to each other. This is helpful not just in the practical day-to-day matters of laboratory work but also means they are more likely to interact with each other casually, which leads to the sharing of ideas and to new experimentation.

The building will also become the home to our signature programs with an inherent need for more integration of specialties – for example, aging and cancer have direct relationships. You can read more about how those will work in the STRF. We also detail student research opportunities and our MD/MPH program that are part of the reasons there will always be a long line of scientists here looking for research space to satisfy their goals of making lives better.

Enjoy the magazine!

Francisco González-Scarano, MD
Dean, School of Medicine
Vice President for Medical Affairs
Professor of Neurology
John P. Howe, III, MD, Distinguished Chair in Health Policy

2011 Important Events

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Admissions Welcome Weekend – April 1-2
Graduation – May 21
White Coat Ceremony – July 24
STRF Ribbon cutting – October 13
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Profile:
Francisco González-Scarano, MD
Dean of the School of Medicine
By Ray Hoese
Dr. Francisco González-Scarano hit the ground running last July as the new Dean of the School of Medicine by attending the White Coat ceremony before he officially began his tenure. It has been nonstop immersion, involvement and engagement ever since.

In many ways, his entire life has been preparing him for this role as the leader of the School of Medicine as it evolves into a preeminent institution of medical education, research and patient care.

González-Scarano was born in the small city of Ponce, on the south central coast of Puerto Rico. His was one of the few Spanish-Italian families on the island. His father, Francisco González-Hernández, was a descendent of a 19th century Spanish soldier who settled in Puerto Rico. His mother, Genoveva Scarano, was from an Italian family that immigrated early in the 20th century.

"Spanish was my first language," he says, "And, of course, English was my second language from a young age. I learned some Italian in college."

Healthcare was very much the family business for the González-Scarano family. A young Francisco saw much of the island as he traveled with his father, mother, aunt and uncle, all of whom served the community’s healthcare needs in various capacities.

Multilingual conversations were most common at his Aunt Catalina’s house, where his Grandmother Scarano also lived. Aunt Catalina Scarano and Uncle Jenaro Scarano, his mother’s brother and sister, were pediatricians. Their house was known as much for his grandmother’s Italian cooking as the place where local children came to see the doctor.

Besides aunt and uncle pediatricians, his father was a public health administrator, and his mother was a nutritionist. His father mostly worked in the office but would occasionally travel the countryside to deal with specific problems such as rabies in cattle or horses. Puerto Rico, which is only 100 miles long by 36 miles wide, was very poor, and healthcare was often taken to the people who could not come into the city.

At age 15 he was sent to boarding school. “At the time, it wasn’t quite clear why my parents sent me away,” he says. “But I don’t think it was because education was ideal in Puerto Rico.”

Just a few years later, González-Scarano was accepted to Yale where he majored in economics. It was not until the end of his third year of college that he began to realize just how influential Aunt Catalina and his parents’ work had become.

“I started college assuming I would get a PhD in economics,” he says. “But as my last year of college approached, I found myself drawn back to biology and the sciences.” By the time graduation rolled around, he had been accepted to Northwestern University’s School of Medicine in Chicago. He received his MD in 1975.

In medical school, González-Scarano was drawn to two different specialties: infectious disease and neurology. It did not take him long to realize where the two disciplines met: neurovirology. In his second year, he conducted research with Professor Howard Lipton, MD, exploring a viral relationship in demyelination in multiple sclerosis.

A three-year residency in neurology, followed by fellowships in microbiology and neurology, set the stage for what would become a significant body of research. When he began his studies, the soon-to-be-discovered HIV virus was sweeping through America.

As often happens in scientific discovery, the pursuit of a theory is often valuable even when it turns out to be wrong. “For a while, it was thought that MS was caused by a retrovirus. We were looking into that, and though it turned out to not be the case, research branching from that became viable and important in AIDS work,” he says as he describes the path his discoveries have taken in establishing the relationships between neurology and infectious disease.

González-Scarano credits his work under Arthur Asbury, MD, and Neal Nathanson, MD, at the University of Pennsylvania as setting the foundation for his significant discoveries in the neuropathology of HIV. He now considers these mentors among his closest friends as well as colleagues.

While an intern in medicine, González-Scarano met second year student Barbara Turner, and they were married in 1979. Turner was interested in primary care and research to improve the delivery of care, which has been the focus of her career. She has spent most of her career as a primary care physician in Philadelphia, some of it at the Penn Center for AIDS Research (CFAR). (See article on Dr. Turner: “A Powerful Partnership with REACH”.)

Before digging in “permanently” to his pursuits, Barbara encouraged him to accept a year-long position in London studying RNA viruses under Sir John Skehel, PhD, with the National Institute for Medical Research. By 1982, the couple was back in the U.S., settling into their careers.

Over the years, his research began to focus on the pathology of HIV in the brain, including the cellular pathology of how the brain blood barrier (BBB) is compromised, as well as what happens after the brain is infected. When he left Penn Medicine, González-Scarano had been co-director of the Center for AIDS Research for 10 years. (He relinquished the position in 2008).

His passion for AIDS research continues today. On Student Research Day this last October, González-Scarano was keynote speaker. His presentation, “HIV in the CNS: a macrophage/microglial disease,” started as an overview for students on the epidemiology of HIV, then specifically on his central nervous system (CNS) work, which established the viral connection to HIV-related cognitive disorders. He highlighted the relationship
between CNS disease/dementia and viral load, as well as the specific neuropathology of how the BBB is compromised and broken down as a result of T-cell infection. There are many fascinating aspects, such as the formation of multinucleated giant cells during the encephalitis and the anomaly of patients with the pathology but no symptoms. The presentation demonstrated González-Scarano's extensive body of work in neural virology, an obvious extension of his early love of both subjects.

Prior to taking the position as Dean, González-Scarano had been the Chair of Neurology at Penn for almost 11 years, a position he accepted in the fall of 1999. “I took that job thinking that 10 years is about the time frame I had for being effective there. At the end of the summer of 2009, my tenth year, the fall approached, and that’s when I started having these thoughts about what am I going to do next. Then I got the call about this job.” He came to San Antonio for the first time in December.

“I loved the city from the first day I set foot in it,” he says.

“I had a wonderful dinner at the Watermark Hotel, then took a walk on the River Walk. It was a cool evening, but people were out walking. The Alamo was beautifully lit. I went up and talked to the security guard and he was really nice. I talked to other people; they were very friendly and down to earth. By the next day, I realized I could live here.”

That was also his first visit with the interviewing committee, which, he recalls, “I enjoyed so much it did not seem like an interview.”

“They were great. Very nice people, dedicated professionals.

“I felt comfortable in a way that is important to fitting in. I could relate to these faculty members and community leaders,” he says.

González-Scarano also found the abundance of Spanish culture attractive as well. “The chance to be bilingual again was a nice bonus,” he says.

Turning the subject to his impression of the School, González-Scarano does not hold back his excitement, his admiration for the faculty, or the size of the job to be done.

“This School is an unpolished gem, a diamond in the rough. It’s relatively young, sizeable and well endowed, backed by a large and prosperous state. We truly have it all – a great faculty and staff, a strong student body, a growing city, a very pleasant and attractive part of the country, and a fairly recession-proof economy.”

He points out that San Antonio is one of only three cities in the nation with a rise in personal income in 2009. (This was for cities of 1 million or more people, and the other two cities were Washington, D.C., and Virginia Beach, VA, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis).

“That alone says a lot,” he says.

“The future is practically unlimited,” González-Scarano says, crediting the work already done at the School by his predecessor, William L. Henrich, MD, FAAC, who was Dean of the School until becoming president of the Health Science Center in 2009. “Dr. Henrich and the faculty have set the stage for really activating our potential. With the MARC, the STRF and the vision for a children’s hospital, the stage is set. We have the potential to be the premier medical institution in the region. We already have the biggest reach.”

“And I am truly excited about the RAHC (the School’s Regional Academic Health Center in Harlingen) and our mission of community service,” González-Scarano says. “With the RAHC located in the most medically-underserved region of the country, it can be a vehicle to maximize our community mission while maximizing our education mission as well.”

But the job is not without its challenges, he notes.

“We had fragmented clinical venues that have moved into one main location. Now our duty, our charge, is to make that a real success, so when people think of UT Medicine San Antonio, they think of the best doctors in the best facility where the patient experience is the most outstanding. We have to reorganize some things, hone our focus and work to discover how we can get there from here.”

He says that a great deal of the job is also fiscal responsibility,
pointing out that the National Institutes for Health (NIH) budget will remain relatively flat for the foreseeable future, and the clinical practice is a key source of revenue.

“We have to do more research and be more competitive to get a bigger portion of the NIH pie,” he says. “We have been very successful in this regard, and I believe we are well-positioned to continue this trend.”

And then there’s the economy and the state budget.

“Comprising 10 percent of our budget, the state will not be a source of more revenue,” he notes. “We have to rely on ourselves, more research, more extramural revenues and growing the clinical practice.”

One of the more ambitious goals – a children’s hospital – is also one he is very enthusiastic about. At UT Medicine this effort is being lead by Thomas Mayes, MD, Chair of Pediatrics, who recently stepped down as CEO of UT Medicine to focus on the planning.

“I truly excited about a new, stand-alone children’s hospital becoming a reality while I am Dean,” González-Scarano says enthusiastically.

González-Scarano recently underwent the process of getting his license to practice in Texas. He knows his responsibilities as Dean will take a lot of time, but he is determined to continue to stay involved in the practice of medicine. As Neurology Chair at Penn Medicine, he saw patients in the Multiple Sclerosis clinic. This was, he says, the only detractor to taking the San Antonio position: leaving behind patients with whom he had a long-standing relationship. Some patients he had followed for 20 years or longer.

“It’s hard not to consider them family,” he says. “The most difficult part of my departure from Philadelphia was leaving my patients. I’m in touch with my friends and colleagues, still e-mailing for personal and professional reasons, but I will never see my patients again. That is difficult.”

As far as his clinic duties here at the School, he says that decision is not his.

“Perhaps it will be with MS patients, perhaps not,” he says. “I leave it to the Chair of Neurology to determine how I can best serve the department.”

Two ceramic apothecary jars sit on the shelf in his office. As a boy, he used to see them on the shelf in his Aunt Catalina’s house. Beautifully crafted and hand-painted, the jars carry a great sentimental value, reminding him of family and his island upbringing.

They also remind him that even in this new, broader role that covers so much as the Dean of the School of Medicine, at the end of the day, his job is to serve the healthcare needs of this community, through the School’s research, education and hands-on patient care.

Research Footnote:
If you are interested in reading more about Dr. González-Scarano’s work, the three references below are a good place to start.


Barbara J. Turner, MD, MSED, MA, FACP, had different criteria for a move anywhere. When her husband, Dr. González-Scarano, approached her about a position in San Antonio, she had just started a new job as the Executive Deputy Editor for the Annals of Internal Medicine. She was just learning the ropes as the Annals’ chief operating officer and greatly invested in this wonderful opportunity. Further, a move meant leaving behind a long-standing clinical practice in primary care that focused on the underserved population of Philadelphia. At the top of her list was her 99-year-old father who still lives in the “City of Brotherly Love.” In addition, she leaves behind her youngest daughter who is in her senior year at the University of Pennsylvania. A move anywhere else would have to be right for many reasons. She had already given thumbs down to another city they had recently considered.

Leaving her practice meant leaving behind approximately hundreds of patients, many of whom she had treated for over 20 years. She shares her husband’s view that her patients had become a second family. She plans to return often to Philadelphia for visits with her father and daughters (another in New York City), but she will never see her patient-family again. Turner threw a party for her staff and patients, and it was a very touching event for all. Her voice cracked with emotion as she described the turnout of patients and the letters that she received later from many patients thanking her for her role in making their lives healthier and, for some, happier.

Turner’s practice was also the platform for her research the last 25 years. That focus has been on making primary care work better, especially in the most challenging circumstances, including the uninsured who might be dealing with multiple issues such as HIV infection, pregnancy and drug abuse.

Dr. Turner’s mind opened to greater possibilities in San Antonio when she began discussing her work with a colleague in Texas, Dr Roberta B. Ness, MD, MPH, who is now the Dean of the School of Public Health at the UT Health Science Center in Houston. Turner had first become acquainted with Ness at the University of Pennsylvania many years before. Currently, the School of Public Health has a joint program with our School of Medicine that offers medical students a Master of Public Health degree to go along with their MD.

“That partnership alone, between the School of Public Health and UT Medicine, told me there were good things going on here,” Turner said.

As Turner and Ness spoke, ideas started to flow. Another important fact that impressed Turner more about the area was Bexar County’s focus on the uninsured and under-insured. She saw the University Health System and Bexar County’s programs as one of the few in the nation that had made a long-term commitment to address the community’s health problems. Then she met her husband’s new boss, the president of the UT Health Science Center San Antonio, William L. Henrich, MD, MACP.

“It really was Dr. Henrich, who encouraged me to think deeply about what I could do here to make a difference,” Turner says appreciatively. “He encouraged me to take into consideration my research background and experience in primary care and to come up with a way to apply it to the complex needs of Central and South Texas.”

The result is called “REACH”, which stands for “Research to Advance Community Health.” It will be a joint program between the School of Public Health, University Health System and the School of Medicine.

“I have to also acknowledge my enthusiasm for the work of Dr. Jaén, as well,” Turner says, referring to Carlos Jaén, MD, Chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine. “His work
on creating the patient-centered medical home is truly the direction we need to go in this country, and the fact that he is here also made this university very attractive to me."

“REACH will take advantage of a broad range of talent within the UHS delivery system and two wonderful academic centers – the Health Science Center and the School of Public Health,” Turner said.

Turner’s enthusiasm comes through when she talks about her work and the valuable data that can be mined from existing databases, something her research focused on Philadelphia. “We want to harness the data from electronic medical records and other health care encounter records to enable people to critically examine at the baseline delivery of care, so we can implement interventions to meet the diverse needs of this community in order to improve health outcomes.”

Her previous work has revealed how the nuances of socioeconomic status, education, race and the specific disease(s) all play important roles that must be factored into the healthcare equation. The School’s Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics will play a partnering role in the REACH program as well.

So, how did the family factor into the move? The nest was fairly empty as they made the decision. Their three daughters are already moving down the roads of their own careers. Genevieve, 29, who is getting married in March, lives in Los Angeles and is working on her MBA from the USC School of Business. Stephanie, 26, lives in New York and is an artist whose medium is oil paintings. One of Turner’s Masters’ degrees is in art history, so this was not a surprise. Similarly, the youngest daughter, Lisa, 22, is at the University of Pennsylvania, studying economics, which was her father’s undergraduate major.

Turner is not sure when they will have the first full family gathering in San Antonio. “The attraction will be greater when we move into a new home this spring!” she says, “After our eldest’s marriage in March to Jon Cohen, Hollywood producer, our current apartment is not going to fit everyone.”

The interviews now available are:
• Dale E. Bennett, MD, Professor, Pathology
• William S. Blumenthal, MD, Professor, Physiology and Internal Medicine
• Marvin Forland, MD, Professor, Physiology and Internal Medicine
• Arthur E. Grant, MD, Chair, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
• John M. Herring, M.D, Professor, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
• Henry C. McGill, Jr., MD, Chair, Pathology
• Arthur S. McFee, MD, Professor of Surgery, and wife, Mrs. Iris McFee.
• F.C. Pannill, MD, Dean
• Charles A. Rockwood, Jr., MD, Chair of Orthopaedic Surgery
Tucked away in labs across campus, investigators are discovering ways to regrow human tissues, muscle and organs. Some are challenging the conventional wisdom for treating diabetes. Others are studying the aging process at the molecular level to learn how to prevent age-related disease. Soon these researchers will not be working in isolated labs in far-flung pockets of campus. When the first investigators move into the new South Texas Research Facility (STRF) in September 2011, it will usher in a new era that will change the trajectory of research at the Health Science Center.

With an abundance of open, modern lab space in a specially designed building, basic and clinical researchers from various disciplines will work together to not only come up with new discoveries but to ask new questions. The building is designed to spur innovation and progress as investigators in a handful of extremely active research fields will work side-by-side.

“No individual can be a successful scientist on their own,” says Dr. Brian Herman, UT Health Science Center Vice President for Research. “The questions today are too complex. Multiple kinds of expertise are needed to solve today’s questions, so we have to create an environment where that can occur.”

Faculty from the other schools as well as multiple departments within the School of Medicine will work alongside each other in the new building, located on Floyd Curl Drive between the Greehey Children’s Cancer Research Institute (on the Greehey Academic and Research Campus) and the MARC across the street.

Most of the investigators leading teams there will be from the School of Medicine. Putting clinicians together with basic scientists will facilitate research that ultimately results in better patient care, says Paula Shireman, MD, Associate Dean for Research and Professor of Vascular/Endovascular Surgery in the School of Medicine.

“We’re all striving to work together more. It’s happening all across the University now. It is going to be a major focus in research, and the STRF will make it easier to do that,” Shireman says. “The goal is to take people with a passion for a question, with hugely different backgrounds and expertise, and put them together. When you do that, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

This shifting approach to research is vital to solving health issues that spread across fields and disciplines. For example, investigators doing research in the fields of healthy aging, neuroscience or regenerative medicine can make discoveries that improve outcomes for a patient suffering from diabetes. By promoting interaction among researchers, findings have a better chance of translating into better patient care.

“It will change the whole University,” Shireman says. “It’s the model of how research today should be performed.”

When it is fully occupied, the STRF will house 350 faculty and staff members. Plans are to fill 60 percent of the building with current faculty and their teams and to use the remaining space for new recruits.

“The more multidisciplinary we can make it, the stronger the STRF will be,” Shireman says. “I think it is an amazing opportunity to increase the amount and quality of research that this campus does and that will leverage us to be in a better position to compete for funds in the future, as well as to improve patient care through research.”

SIX SPECIALTY AREAS

Four years ago, an assessment of campus facilities revealed that while research activity at the Health Science Center had
grown an average of 13 percent each year, research space had not expanded to keep pace. In fact, coordinators with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board found that based on its size and activity levels, the campus had a deficit of 350,000 square feet of research space.

At the same time, University officials were developing a strategic plan, identifying several research areas in which the University already had excellence or emerging strength, while also factoring in regional health needs and prospective partnering institutions in the region that could lead to more research opportunities.

Plans for the STRF came out of those processes as a way to add 200,000 additional square feet of research space and further research in six key medical research programs:

- **Adult Cancer.** Cancer is the number one area of research in terms of funding at the Health Science Center. Research at the STRF will build upon work now underway at the Cancer Therapy & Research Center (CTRC).
- **Neuroscience.** This broad field draws almost as much research funding as cancer, involving investigators from both the School of Medicine and the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.
- **Regenerative Medicine.** This field, which is a focus of School of Medicine researchers from multiple departments, has benefited from a longstanding partnership with the military and the treatment of wounded soldiers.
- **Healthy Aging.** The STRF will help expand and strengthen the clinical component of aging research on campus. The new Center for Healthy Aging will occupy STRF space, with researchers working hand-in-hand with the Barshop Institute for Longevity and Aging Studies.
- **Diabetes.** The School of Medicine has a very strong diabetes research program that will benefit from the move to the STRF, which will unite basic and clinical diabetes researchers together in the same place for the first time.

**STRF: THE BEGINNING**

To pursue a new model of research, you need a new type of building... That’s the philosophy behind the design of the new South Texas Research Facility – STRF, now under construction on the Greehey Academic and Research Campus. “Since the purpose of the STRF is to foster research innovation through collaboration, the building is uniquely designed to promote interaction among its occupants,” says Dr. Brian Herman, UT Health Science Center Vice President for Research.

“We worked very hard to find an architect that knew how to do this,” Herman says.

Health Science Center leaders selected Rafael Viñoly Architects to design the new facility. The New York City-based firm has a strong track record of academic and research institutions that set the stage for collaboration among occupants.

The floor plan includes features specifically designed to promote interaction. Entryways are designed to sweep people into common areas, such as four ground-floor lobbies where people congregate on their way up to the lab space and faculty offices on the next level.

Meeting spaces of all sizes and types are built into the facility, such as quiet nooks for contemplation; small, informal gathering places; and rooms for group presentations.

The building’s footprint is huge, offering 200,000 square feet of space over just three stories. At more than 1,000 feet long, if you tipped the Eiffel Tower on its side, it would be roughly as long as the STRF.

To maintain the opportunity for informal interaction among researchers, the building design creates a sense of community by keeping all of the laboratory space on the second floor, as opposed to stacking research spaces on top of each other in multiple stories. In the research areas, open lab benches let scientists from different disciplines work in close proximity to each other.

“The open lab environment promotes interaction. It’s more efficient and leads to more collaboration among researchers,” Herman says. “It’s a model of a research environment that will likely be adopted by many other institutions in the future.”

Investigators in each of the STRF’s main research programs worked with the architects to outfit lab space for their specific needs. At the same time, the building was designed to include generic laboratory spaces that could be used for any program, says John Cole, PhD, Special Assistant to the Vice President of Research and Director of STRF Operations. This strategy eliminates the need for costly building renovations when programs change, Cole says.

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THE BIG SIX:
EXPANDING CORE RESEARCH PROGRAMS
By Karen Kolivosky

Research in six core “Signature Programs” will expand as investigators move into the South Texas Research Facility (STRF) next year. Here’s a look at new and upcoming developments in each area.

HEALTHY AGING

Laboratory and administrative space in the new facility will support the efforts of the new Center for Healthy Aging, led by founding Director Nicolas Musi, MD, a diabetes researcher and Associate Professor in the School of Medicine. Musi is also the new director for the Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center (GRECC), part of the South Texas Veterans Health Care System.

Much of current aging research is focused on trying to understand the basic mechanisms of aging and the molecular basis behind age-related diseases such as cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer’s Disease. Through the Center for Healthy Aging, those findings will be further studied in patient-oriented research.

The Center for Healthy Aging will work closely with the Barshop Institute for Longevity and Aging Studies to apply major findings in basic research to translational research that ultimately improves the lives of older people.

“It is imperative to find ways to improve their quality of life, to prevent some of the diseases that affect older people and to find better ways to treat them, so older people live longer and happier lives,” Musi says.

For example, one theory holds that aging is caused by an accumulation over time of free radicals, generated by the body in small amounts in daily living. Musi is currently conducting research testing the theory in cells, rodents and humans to find out if the theory is accurate, and if so, whether there are ways to prevent damage caused by free radicals, such as through exercise, which produces an anti-oxidant effect.

Part of Musi’s work at the Center for Healthy Aging is looking at not only specific health issues, from frailty and weakness to dementia and diabetes, but also finding the best and most efficient ways to treat elderly patients.

ADULT CANCER

Months before it opens, the STRF is already shaping the future of adult cancer research at the Health Science Center. The state-of-the-art facility has been a major factor in recruiting research faculty.

One principal investigator who will move into the facility is Tyler Curiel, MD, Professor of Hematology and Medical Oncology. Curiel’s research focuses on finding anti-tumor immune response triggers and developing immune therapies for cancers by boosting the body’s immune system. He holds patents and patents-pending for several therapies for infectious diseases and cancers.

The STRF will support and build upon the cancer research of the CTRC. One particularly strong focus there is prostate cancer research. Ian Thompson, MD, Director of the CTRC, who also chaired the Department of Urology and leads the Genitourinary Cancer Clinic at the CTRC, is a renowned researcher, and has run major national studies looking for early markers for prostate cancer. He also oversees another large research effort that examines the accuracy of the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test, widely used as a screening tool for prostate cancer.

Luzhe Sun, PhD, an Associate Director for Translational Research at the CTRC and co-leader of the Cell & Molecular Biology (CMB) Track of the Integrated Multidisciplinary Graduate Program, is helping to coordinate faculty and staff transitions into the STRF. With its state-of-the-art facilities and collaboration-fueling design, the building will continue to be a valuable recruiting tool for expanding the University’s existing pool of cancer researchers, Sun says.

“It’s definitely a plus with respect to how it’s designed for the modern molecular and cell biology kind of research,” Sun says. “The open lab space format is definitely going to enhance and facilitate the interaction among the scientists who are working in the STRF.”

The facility will also pave the way for large-scale, multi-investigator project grants. While some Health Science Center researchers are involved with this type of grant, more are needed – especially for cancer, Sun says.

“This is really something that we can sell very well to scientists who are interested in relocating to our university for cancer research and other types of research,” he says.

DIABETES

When it comes to diabetes research, the STRF will make a great thing even better, says Ralph DeFronzo, MD. DeFronzo is the Division Chief of...
Diabetes, a Professor of Medicine, Director of the General Clinical Research Center (GCRC), a staff physician at the South Texas Veterans Health Care System and Deputy Director of the Texas Diabetes Institute.

"I’m not bragging, but we have the best diabetes division in the world. We have the best combination of basic science and clinical research," he says. "There is nobody in the world that does what we’ve done or has the track record of publications that we have."

DeFronzo has the credentials to back that up. He’s renowned for a lifetime of pioneering Type 2 diabetes research and treatment, not only on this campus but around the world. He’s won diabetes’ highest honors both nationally and internationally.

Still, DeFronzo is busy looking ahead. He’s extremely excited about the changes that the diabetes division will undergo when it relocates to the STRF. Basic scientists studying the disease from within the Graduate School of Biological Sciences will work alongside clinical diabetes researchers from the School of Medicine, clustering all diabetes-related research together on one floor in one building.

"Number one, this will foster interaction of ideas. We’re all together and that encourages the interaction between people and the exchange of ideas," he says. "When you sit and you see someone all the time, most of the exciting ideas get generated from these informal conversations, because you’re just there with the person in the lab or in the office all the time. So this is going to be a huge advantage."

Working together will also advance translational research, DeFronzo adds, as basic scientists work alongside clinicians. "What we’re trying to do is to get some of these basic observations that potentially could lead to improved diabetes care in the form of new drugs or a cure and get them into the translational arena for humans," he says.

Diabetes research is a special focus at the entire university due to its impact on South Texas. One large diabetes study now underway is allowing DeFronzo to formally challenge the current American Diabetes Association’s algorithm for the treatment of diabetes. The funding agency? The ADA itself.

“There are other newer drugs approved by the FDA – and we worked to help develop those drugs – that, in my opinion, are far superior to the old sort of approach that the ADA advocates. In fact, we have a large grant from ADA so we can prove them right or wrong,” DeFronzo says.

NEUROSCIENCE

Neuroscience is the second-largest area of research at the entire Health Science Center, drawing almost as much funding as cancer and encompassing approximately 25 percent of total NIH funding here.
Regenerative medicine is a broad field. It includes anything from wound healing to diabetes treatment. Steven Wolf, MD, Vice Chair for Research and Professor in the Department of Surgery, is tasked with assembling the team and preparing the space to continue their cutting-edge research. Investigators from the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and the Dental School will join School of Medicine faculty, keeping the focus on translational research that will advance patient care.

“What we’re actually trying to get to is products we put into people that address functional needs that we can see every day because we have clinicians working in the group,” Wolf says. “Because of the presence of those kinds of folks, there’s a drive to get products moved toward use in patients. Getting knowledge itself is good, but we want knowledge that we can apply.”

Wolf is well-known as the researcher behind “pixie dust,” his name for Regenerative Medicine Extracellular Matrix, a substance derived from pig bladders that has successfully regrown organs in animal models and shows promise in regrowing human tissue.

Once they set up shop in the STRF, Wolf and his team will continue studying extracellular matrix and stem cells and their potential in regenerating muscle, bone and organs. The space is also being fitted to allow researchers to add work with bioreactors to their research repertoire.

“You can take cells or portions of organs from patients, take them out and put them in a bioreactor, which keeps things alive and puts them in other constructs, then put the new things back into the patient,” he says. “Researchers are making bladders and kidneys and things like that, which are quite interesting.”

While other institutions across the country have made great strides in the field, researchers here have unique opportunities to make advances with the many institutional partners located in the area including the military with research for combat casualty care, and the military and county trauma centers as well as the...
burgeoning local biomedical industry.

“We really are primed to take off in terms of regenerative medicine for acquired loss of tissues from injury,” Wolf says. “San Antonio has a lot of great things to make this happen. It’s kind of a crucible now. We just have to get it set on fire, and I think the STRF is certainly going to bring us closer to doing that.”

IIMS

The Institute for Integration of Medicine and Science (IIMS) is the entity formed to carry out the $26.2 million Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) awarded by the NIH in 2008. The CTSA awards are large infrastructure grants to support clinical and translational research generally within medical school settings; the Health Science Center holds one of 54 CTSA grants now in effect nationwide.

Robert Clark, MD, Assistant Vice President for Clinical Research and Professor of Medicine is the Director of the IIMS. The Institute was purposely set up so that it did not become a part of one of the five schools within the Health Science Center. Instead, it serves as an overarching entity to support activities in all five schools and the 10 regional partners ranging from the San Antonio Military Medical Center to the Regional Academic Health Center in Harlingen.

All of the IIMS’s administrative functions will move into the new STRF, which will be an ideal fit for the Institute’s activities and goals. Both the Institute and the STRF are designed to further Type 1 translational research, which encompasses developing a new treatment, testing it under controlled conditions, showing it is safe and effective and making it available for practice. The IIMS takes it a step further with an additional focus on Type 2 translational research—research that assesses how to get new findings into the practice of medicine on a day-to-day basis.

“The STRF is dedicated to translational research, Type 1 translation predominantly, so that allows for a growth in the range and scope of translational research activities, which is part of our vision,” Clark says.

“What works to move those findings out, and to the extent that it is happening, what are the results? Is it fulfilling the promise that it appeared to have in Type 1 translational studies? What’s the impact on the public health level? We support that whole spectrum.”

The IIMS is carrying out its mission in multiple ways. Students from all schools and some partnering agencies can pursue a Master’s of Science and Clinical Investigation. When students in graduate school are interested in moving their research in a more clinical or translational direction, there is a program to support them. A new PhD program in translational sciences will be ready for its first students in Fall 2011. This is a joint program involving the Health Science Center, UTSA, the San Antonio campus of the UT School of Public Health and the College of Pharmacy at UT Austin.

“It’s a huge job to develop a brand new PhD program. The group has been working really hard on it, and we’re getting very close,” Clark says.

Career development programs that train faculty in translational research are also a major focus of the Institute. Faculty from any of the schools can participate. So far, the majority have come from the School of Medicine.

Other research education programs provide instruction for grant writing, strategies for career development, getting papers written and published – “the nitty-gritty of being successful in an academic career.”

The IIMS is founded with a unique multiple principal investigator structure. Activities within the IIMS fall into three main categories: Research Education and Training, headed by IIMS Deputy Director Michael Lichtenstein, MD, Chief of Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology & Palliative Medicine, and Professor of Medicine; Research Support, headed by Dr. Clark; and Clinical Research Infrastructure and Community Engagement, led by Ken Hargreaves, DDS, PhD, Chair of Endodontics and Professor of Endodontics as well as Pharmacology and Physiology.
Some students go into medicine; some go into graduate school. David Melton decided to do both.

Melton knew he wanted his medical career to include caring for patients, but he has also been fascinated by research since his undergraduate days. The MD/PhD dual degree program was the perfect choice, allowing him to pursue his interests in both.

In the seven-year program, students attend the first two years of medical school while doing research rotations in the summer, then spend the next three years earning their PhD. After that, they return to medical school, start rotations like other third-year students and complete the last two years of physician training.

The program, which is co-sponsored by the School of Medicine and the Graduate School of Biomedical Science, offers the added benefit of full tuition reimbursement and an annual $21,000 stipend.

It is one of several paths that School of Medicine students can take to incorporate research into their journey to a medical degree. Options also include the Summer Research Program and earning an MD with a Distinction in Research programs.

Opportunities for students to pursue research have expanded in the last five years, along with student interest in research.

“Every time we advertise research opportunities, the students get pumped up and want to know more,” says Sandra Burge, MD, Interim Director for Medical Student Research Programs and School of Medicine Professor of Family and Community Medicine. “I think part of their interest is exploring to see if it’s a career possibility, and I think some of them are doing it because they want to include that as part of their training.”

The goal of exposing students to research is two-fold, Burge says. First, it generates interest in research and might encourage more to pursue it in the future. Second, knowledge of research makes them better clinicians.

“We want to help students become interested in research not only as a career but also to help their clinical career,” Burge says. “Whether they choose to become researchers in the future or practitioners, it’s important for them to understand medical research.”

**HOOKED ON RESEARCH**

Melton got hooked on research as an undergraduate at North Texas University. While pursuing two degrees in chemistry and biochemistry, he began doing computer-based research for his organic chemistry professor, who was also a medicinal chemist. Melton worked on drug design research, modeling anti-epileptic drugs and their receptors on the computer.

He’s now in his third year of the graduate school portion of the MD/PhD program, which enrolled its first students in 2005. Today, 30 students are enrolled the program.

“Many people still don’t know we’re here yet,” Melton says. When he completes the program, he sees himself dividing time between a lab and a clinic, though that might have to wait; he is also considering post-doctoral training after finishing his residency.

“The real goal of an MD/PhD is to have a practice, have patients, and have research, too, that can help those patients directly,” Melton says. “He wants to do research that directly affects the lives of his patients.”

His lab mentor is Dr. Paula Shireman, a prime example of a clinician/scientist. In addition to being a vascular surgeon, Shireman conducts research in regenerative medicine in her basic science lab, along with her roles as the School of Medicine Associate Dean for Research and Professor of Surgery and Medicine. Melton is laying the groundwork now for a similar multifaceted career.

“She does it all. That’s exactly what I’d like to do,” he says. “We have a dichotomy of passions – you love the medicine, you love...
the people, but you love the science too. You want to be able to
give your patient answers instead of saying ‘there’s no research,
so we don’t know that answer.’”

**IT ALL STARTS WITH SUMMER**

Melton and his fellow MD/PhD students spent their summer break in a research rotation. So did dozens of SOM students who spent between five and eight weeks of summer in laboratories and clinics as part of the Summer Research Program.

The program pairs students with mentors to work on research projects over the summer. This year, a record number of 80 students participated in the summer program, which culminates with a poster presentation at Medical Student Research Day. Students between their first and second years are eligible to participate.

The students’ motivations for the programs are varied, Burge says. Some want to beef up their residency applications; others want to see if research is something they want to consider as a future career; others simply want to keep their skills sharp over the summer. The program also offers a stipend of $250 a week.

Burge helps students identify potential faculty members to serve as mentors. It is then up to the student to contact possible mentors, find a match and work with the faculty member to develop a research project that the student can complete over the summer. This year, about half of the students participated in basic research and half in clinical.

“Many students don’t have a very good idea of what they want to do. They want to learn more about research, but some of them have never done any before,” Burge says.

Deborah Hong, a second-year student, fit that description. With no previous research experience, she was eager to give it a try. She spent last summer participating in bench research relating to cancer.

“It was fantastic for me because I learned I really do like research, and I’m definitely interested in incorporating it into my career as a physician,” Hong says.

The experience made her want to try translational and clinical research in the future and also helped her define her interest in oncology as an area of specialization.

“It was very exciting to work on things that, in the future, help in the treatment of cancer patients,” Hong says.

Like Hong, second-year student Nancy Aguwa had little experience in research before enrolling in the summer program. Aguwa conducted research over the summer at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, near her home. The program gave her a chance to work alongside researchers studying a rare autoimmune disorder that hardens the skin of patients.

She shadowed her mentor in rounds with patients and also worked in a laboratory environment, using enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) to detect the presence of antibodies in the blood. The experience was challenging, Aguwa says, but also piqued her interest in research. She’s now planning on pursuing the MD with Distinction in Research program.

In this program, students maintain their medical school schedule and also work with a mentor who assists the student in planning, direction and execution of a research program to pursue outside of school during summers, weekends and evenings. Students must devote a minimum of four months to their extracurricular research; the Summer Research Program counts toward the requirement.

To complete the program, students prepare a publishable, journal-ready thesis based on their research. The first students graduated from this program in 2009; currently, there are 10 students enrolled.

As new student research programs get established and as the capacity for research on campus expands (with the opening of the South Texas Research Facility), student interest in research is poised to continue its current trajectory of growth. For example, student participation in the Summer Research Program has roughly doubled since five years ago, Burge says, and this year’s
Poster presentation sparked several phone calls and meetings with students interested in learning more about research opportunities.

“There’s an upswing of interest,” Burge says. “I don’t know if it’s because we’ve become better at being mentors or if more faculty are interested in research. I’m not sure how it happened, but it’s pretty exciting.”

**What I did on my summer vacation:**

When you’ve never done research before, how do you jump into it and produce useful information in a short time frame?

A successful research project usually doesn’t happen in neat, six-week chunks, says MD/PhD student David Melton, who has undertaken several summer research rotations.

But students do have the opportunity to move the ball a little farther down the field with their relatively brief summer research stints. One benefit of participating in research is the excitement of making a contribution to the body of medical knowledge, he says.

“They’re obviously not going to complete the breadth of the information in a simple six-week rotation, but they’re going to add a little piece of the puzzle to the entire thing,” Melton says.

Melton describes the process:

“When you come into a lab a professor will say, ‘I have a project in mind that I’ve been wanting to start. Here’s the general idea, why don’t you take it from there and see what you can find out.’ You grow that idea, research it and hypothesize something and find a way to test it. That information grows the entire breadth of knowledge of the lab. You feel like you’re contributing something.”

Summer research students are required to print a poster outlining their project and findings, a process that’s also valuable, says Burge. The posters train students in how to talk the language of research, Burge says.

“IT helps them join the conversation with researchers,” she says. “They begin to understand what researchers are telling you when you read journal articles. The poster exercise is really good at that. The posters are written like you would write a journal article, only much shorter.”

Melton easily launches into discussions of several of his research studies, such as last summer’s work in the lab of Peter Hornsby, PhD, professor of physiology in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. Melton worked on a comparative study between humans and marmosets and their resistance to the toxic effects of Amyloid β 1-42, which he summarized in a poster he presented during Medical Student Research Day in October 2010.

Melton also points out some of the challenges facing student researchers. Since six weeks is a limited time to try to finish a project because sometimes research projects don’t work out or turn out to be more complicated than initially anticipated, the real value of summer research rotations is the experience itself.

“The goal of the research rotation is not to finish the project. It’s to get to know the PI, see if they might be a mentor, learn some great research techniques, learn how to conduct research,” he says. “Finishing a project is great if you’re able to do it.”

Students explain and discuss their work at the poster session on Student Research Day, October 14, 2010.
10th Annual Medical Student Research Day Awards

The following SOM students were honored at the tenth annual Medical Student Research Day, which drew more than 70 students to present posters based upon their research. The event included students from the MD/PhD, MD with Distinction in Research and Summer Research Programs, as well as the Medical Student Training in Aging Research (MSTAR) program.

1st place: Eunice Yook; Mentor, Kent L. Anderson, MD, PhD
Ophthalmology. "Torsional Changes Under Routine Ophthalmic Anesthesia."

2nd place: Sarah L. Crandall; Mentor, Robert A. Johnson, PhD

3rd place: Shushan Rana; Mentor, Murat Digicaylioglu, MD, PhD
Neurosurgery. "Differential Regulation of Neuronal Apoptosis by IFG-1 and microRNA-29b."

Honorable Mention: Richard Rigby Jr.; Mentor, Rita Ghosh, PhD
Urology. "Akt/mTOR-mediated Cell Survival Pathway as a Potential Target for Bladder Cancer Growth Inhibition."

Honorable Mention: Joshua Russell; Mentor, Anil Dutta, MD
Orthopaedics. "Biomechanical Comparison of PHILOS Locking Humerus Plate Screw Configurations."

Honorable Mention: Derek Samples; Mentor, Murat Digicaylioglu, MD, PhD; Neurosurgery. "Role of Telmisartan in an Ischemic Stroke Model."

In Memoriam

Daniel Carlisle, MD

It is with great sadness that we note the unexpected and untimely death of Daniel Carlisle, MD, on December 19, 2010. Dr. Carlisle had been a member of the School of Medicine and Health Science Center family since 2002.

Carlisle was valedictorian of his 1991 class in the School of Medicine and then completed a General Surgery internship here before moving to the Campbell Clinic at the University of Tennessee for his residency in Orthopaedics. He worked in private practice and returned to his alma mater as residency program director in 2002, a role in which he had the opportunity to train and supervise the training of outstanding residents and medical students. He served as interim chair and then chair of the Department of Orthopaedics from 2007 until July of 2010, when he retired from this position for health reasons. He had continued to be highly involved in resident education in our Department of Orthopaedics until his death.

Dr. Carlisle is survived by his wife Lee Carlisle, MD, Medical Director of UT Medicine’s Ambulatory Surgery Center, and their sons, Daniel Jr., 15, and Jack Harrison, 14.

J. Bradley Aust, MD, PhD

We are deeply saddened to announce that J. Bradley Aust, MD, PhD, the Dale H. Dorn Distinguished Professor of Surgery, died in the early morning of March 17, 2010.

As founding chairman of the Department of Surgery, Aust was critical to the growth and success of the School, the Health Science Center, the University Health System and the South Texas Veterans Health Care System.

Aust’s graduation from the University of Buffalo Medical School in 1949 marked the beginning of a remarkable academic and surgical career. In 1958, he was certified in Surgery and joined the faculty of the University of Minnesota as a scholar of the American Cancer Society. His pioneering work involved the areas of total blood volume determination, coronary artery revascularization, measurement of tissue blood flow, organ transplantation and surgical oncology. In 1965, Dr. Aust was contacted by Dean Carter Pannill, MD, from San Antonio. Pannill showed Aust a field with two silos on the outskirts of the city, where he was invited to head a new department of surgery. “The offer to help start a new medical school and develop the department of surgery was too good an opportunity to pass up,” Aust later recounted.

During his tenure as the Chairman of Surgery, he trained more than 150 surgeons. As a testament to Aust’s educational leadership, these surgeons have changed the surgical landscape of San Antonio, South Texas and the world.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 60 years, Connie and their six children, Jay Aust and wife Christi Carletti, Barbara Hodge, Mary Lou Gallion and husband John, Tracey Norment and husband Mike, Dr. Bonnie Aust and husband Dr. Peter Rotwein, and Linda Aust; 12 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. Also surviving are his brother Dr. John Aust and wife Bethany.
The CTRC Cabinet consists of a vital group of individuals and businesses who contribute $1,000 or more annually to support the mission of the Cancer Therapy & Research Center to conquer cancer through research, prevention and treatment. For more information on the Cabinet, call (210) 450-5583.

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University Health System
Breaks Ground on New Trauma Tower

University Health System held the third and final groundbreaking ceremony for its “Target 2012: Capital Improvement Program” on January 21st. Staged in the parking lot of the original hospital which was built along with the School of Medicine in the 1960s, the construction is for the ten-story “Trauma Tower” that will expand the hospital’s capacity to over 700 beds. At one million square feet, it will feature a new and expanded emergency room as well as state-of-the-art operating rooms and diagnostic equipment. The building is scheduled to open in the Spring of 2014.

The prior two groundbreaking ceremonies were for the 3,300-car parking lot at this location which is now nearly complete, and the University Health Center Downtown, which took place in December of 2010. The building downtown includes a six-story clinical building as well as renovations to the original Robert B. Green Hospital which was built in 1915. At a total cost of $900 million for the three projects, this is one of the largest construction programs in San Antonio History.

These new facilities downtown and in the Medical Center will help reduce wait times, expand access, and offer the latest technologies and advanced treatment options. “In partnership with The UT Health Science Center School of Medicine, we are one of the nation’s leading academic medical centers, and our capital improvement program will further advance this joint mission to provide the very highest level of care to patients with even the most complex problems,” says George B. Hernández, Jr., University Health System President/CEO.

Since the two institutions (the School and the Hospital) were built 42 years ago, there has been a long history of joint programs that have gained regional and national acclaim, including Transplant, Trauma, the Pediatric Burn Program, the PREMIEre Program for premature infants and Neurosurgery. These are among many programs that have served the Bexar County community and South Texas as well. Opening soon is a joint Heart Lung Vascular Institute that will see outpatients at the Medical Arts & Research Center (MARC).

The January groundbreaking featured five “medical miracle” patients including Larry Price, San Antonio Police officer and esophageal cancer survivor. He read the convocation along with Jane Swanson, who survived a gunshot wound to the head several years ago. Then, Nicholas Velasquez, a 10-year-old, car crash survivor, and Chaciti McMorris, a 9-year-old burn survivor, read the pledge of allegiance together. In a very emotional moment, the final part of the opening ceremony was patient Sandra Haggray singing a beautiful rendition of the national anthem. Her performance was incredible and miraculous as she is the recipient of a rare double-lung transplant which not only saved her life, but allowed her to return to singing. These patients represent a powerful integration of the School’s outstanding faculty providers with the hospital.

A host of dignitaries spoke, many of whom have been involved in planning the project. This included Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff, Chairman of the Bexar County Hospital District Board Dr. Roberto Jimenez, MD, School of Medicine Dean Francisco González-Scarano, MD, and the Regional Director for the US Department of Health & Human Services, Marjorie Petty.
In December of 2009, the Board of Directors for the Raul Tijerina, Jr. Foundation voted to award eight $2,500 scholarships to medical students studying at the School of Medicine's Regional Academic Health Center (RAHC). The foundation, established to honor Mr. Tijerina's life of service to his friends and community, forever changed the lives of eight students training in the Rio Grande Valley. The students receiving scholarships this year are Christine Burke, Adesuwa Egharevba, Ben Francisco, Martin Hechnova, Elizabeth Melia, Kimberly Onyirioha, Mark Rowan, and Zachary Taylor.

Rancher, banker, businessman and community leader, Raul Tijerina, Jr., touched many lives across the Rio Grande Valley. He dedicated his time and resources to the development and expansion of public causes and service, and to the enrichment of his fellow citizens with a focus on quality, accessible education. Working with community organizations, he came to realize that the greatest resources in any community are the people and the members of nonprofit organizations who volunteer their knowledge, skills, time and good-will in service to their friends and neighbors. His wife, Hortensia Tijerina, carries on his legacy of community service through the organization that bears her late husband’s name.

“The Raul Tijerina, Jr. Foundation is pleased to make this investment in future healthcare providers for the Rio Grande Valley and in the outstanding work of the Regional Academic Health Center,” said Mrs. Tijerina about the grant. “We hope that these scholarships help in the greater effort to expand the quality and depth of medical care available to the communities of deep, south Texas.”

Since its dedication eight years ago, over 830 medical students have rotated through the RAHC for their third year of medical school, a clerkship rotation, or an elective course. These numbers are significant and highly relevant to the citizens of the Rio Grande Valley. The more exposure these students have to South Texas, the more likely they are to return to South Texas to practice medicine.

The need for healthcare providers in South Texas is great. While individual communities like Harlingen and McAllen may have an adequate number of physicians, there is a significant shortage of physicians in the overall four-county area of Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy counties. Each of them has been designated by the U.S. government as being medically underserved.

In addition to medical clerkships and rotations, RAHC students are offered the opportunity to work on community projects in response to community-identified concerns and needs. They are able to learn about the community, build relationships and at the same time, provide a service by volunteering their time in projects that are approved and supervised by faculty and physician mentors.

“When our Tijerina Scholars graduate from medical school, they will have made important connections in South Texas through their clinical training and valuable contributions to our citizens through community service learning programs and projects,” remarked Francisco González-Scarano, MD, the new Dean of the School of Medicine. “Through these scholarships, the Raul Tijerina, Jr. Foundation is helping plant invaluable seeds for the future of health of the people of the Rio Grande Valley.”
Aguilar Research in NAS / Receives State Cancer Funding

Ricardo Aguiar, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Hematology and Medical Oncology, is on the team of researchers whose study of large B-cell lymphoma was published in the 2010 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The study reveals a potential new way to cure this type of lymphoma by dampening the activity of a gene that makes the cancer more aggressive. Generous funding from The Max and Minnie Tomerlin Voelcker Fund supported this research, which also included Patricia Dahia, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Hematology and Medical Oncology. Aguiar, a member of the Experimental and Developmental Therapeutics Program of the Cancer Therapy & Research Center (CTRC), also received an $800,000 grant in November 2010 from the state’s Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) to further the lymphoma work.

Peterson Part of Behavior Tourette Syndrome Study

Parents and clinicians now have an effective non-medication treatment option for children with Tourette syndrome and related tic disorders, according to a study published in the May 2010 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA). Alan Peterson, PhD, Professor of Psychiatry, helped design both the behavioral therapy and the “Comprehensive Behavioral Intervention for Tics” (or CBIT) study. In the late 1980s, while still a student, Peterson was instrumental in conducting the first studies of this behavioral therapy treatment. The recent research was conducted by a team of investigators from other major universities. The study found that this specialized form of behavioral therapy significantly reduced chronic tics and tic-related problems in children and adolescents with the chronic neurological condition Tourette syndrome.

Ravdin Leads Breast Health Clinic at the CTRC

Peter Ravdin, MD, PhD, Associate Professor of Hematology and Medical Oncology, has been named Director of the Breast Health Clinic at the Cancer Therapy & Research Center (CTRC). In March 2010, Ravdin rejoined the faculty after eight years of working independently, most notably on developing “Adjuvant!,” a popular computer tool for estimating benefits and risks of chemotherapy after breast-cancer surgery. In April 2010, Ravdin accepted the American Society of Breast Diseases “Pathfinder” award for the fight against breast disease and cancer. Ravdin previously served on the faculty from 1987 to 2002. He directed major clinical trials, including one leading to the approval of the widely used breast-cancer drug Taxotere. He also served as an Executive Officer of the Southwest Oncology Group, one of the largest National Cancer Institute-funded cancer clinical trials cooperative groups in the U.S.

Kraus: Study Compares Two Types of Surgery

Stephen R. Kraus, MD, Professor and Vice Chairman of Urology, coauthored a report of study findings published in the New England Journal of Medicine in July 2010. The study analyzed two techniques for implanting mesh slings to support the bladder. Both options help women who leak urine when they sneeze, cough, laugh or exercise. The study of 597 women, called the Trial of Mid-Urethral Slings (TOMUS), is the first head-to-head comparison of two types of mid-urethral sling surgery for stress urinary incontinence. Both procedures are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and have been shown to be safe and successful. Results of the TOMUS trial will help doctors and patients decide which treatment to have.

Team Finds Adrenal-Cancer Gene / Wins State Cancer Funding

Patricia Dahia, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Hematology and Medical Oncology, has published a study with a team that found a gene causing one type of adrenal cancer. The study, published in Nature Genetics in 2010, was an international collaborative effort involving many investigators as part of the international Consortium for Pheochromocytoma, established several years ago by Dahia. In November 2010, Dahia was awarded $92,000 from the state’s Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) initiative to continue her work on the adrenal-cancer gene.
Investigators Awarded $11.6M to Study Cardiac proteins

A blood test to diagnose which heart attack survivors will suffer heart failure is the goal of a new five-year, $11.6 million contract from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). Merry Lindsey, PhD, Associate Professor of Medicine, will lead the study as the principal investigator of the NHLBI Proteomics Center. Professors of Cardiology Robert Chilton, MD, and John Erikson, MD, will team with Richard Lange, MD, Vice Chair in the Department of Medicine, who is co-investigator/clinical lead on the project. The proteomics center includes faculty members from the School of Medicine and Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the Health Science Center and from the School of Engineering at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Tomlinson: For some women, preventive mastectomies pay off

A study published in September 2010 in the Journal of the American Medical Association confirms the view of one of its researchers, Gail Tomlinson, MD, PhD, Professor of Pediatrics-Hematology-Oncology and Interim Director of the Greehey Children’s Cancer Research Institute. Tomlinson said that for women with certain genetic mutations, risk-reducing mastectomies and removal of the fallopian tubes and ovaries can be worth it. Women who had their ovaries and fallopian tubes removed had a lower risk of ovarian cancer, including those with prior breast cancer, and a lower risk of dying from either cancer.

Plastino Sex Ed Program Gets $10 Million

Kristen Plastino, MD, Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, has been awarded a $10 million grant over five years to expand an innovative sex-education program in the region’s schools. In the first year of the award, she receives $1.2 million from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and another $850,000 from the Department of Health and Human Services. The remainder of the $10 million will come over the four years that follow. The grant will allow Plastino to expand the program beyond its single-year focus to address four years of high school and to build a model that can be replicated throughout the country. Plastino has been working with teens and pregnancy her entire career, starting with her residency in obstetrics and gynecology.

Zhang Receives Grant for Ovarian-Cancer Study

Bin Zhang, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Hematology, has been awarded a $450,000 grant from the Ovarian Cancer Research Fund for his project, “Targeting CD73 to Improve Ovarian Cancer Immunotherapy.” The promise of cancer immunotherapy — using the body’s immune system to fight cancer — has not translated into clinical success, partly because the tumor produces too much of an enzyme, CD73, that makes immunosuppressive nucleosides, which block anti-tumor T-cell (white blood cell) activity. In a mouse ovarian-cancer model, Zhang targeted CD73 with monoclonal antibodies and drugs, inhibiting it to improve anti-tumor T-cell function. He showed that tumor-bearing mice can be cured by a combined treatment of CD73 inhibition and T-cell therapy. The $450,000 grant, paid over three years, will support the continuation of this research.

Ravdin and Schenken Contribute to Landmark Hormone Study

Taking combined hormone-replacement therapy over a long period of time not only increases the risk of developing breast cancer but also doubles the risk of dying from it, according to a large study published in October 2010 in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Two School of Medicine faculty, Robert Schenken, MD, Professor and Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Peter Ravdin, MD, PhD, Director of the Breast Health Clinic at the Cancer Therapy & Research Center, contributed to the Women’s Health Initiative study. The new research shows that the study’s initial results, released seven years ago, have potentially saved thousands of women’s lives.

Gao Study: Hispanic Men May Be More Prone to AIDS-Related Cancer

Shou-Jiang Gao, PhD, Professor of Pediatrics-Infectious Diseases and the H-E-B Distinguished Chair for Cancer Research, has coauthored the first study showing that Hispanic men are more vulnerable to HIV-related cancer than men from other ethnic groups, at least in the South Texas HIV-positive population. Published November 2010 in the Journal...
of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes, the study of 383 HIV-positive patients in South Texas is valuable not only as a clue to guide future research but also as a resource for doctors and HIV-positive patients deciding when to adjust treatment. The study focused on the seropositivity rate for the Kaposi’s sarcoma-associated herpes virus, which accompanies the AIDS virus and Kaposi’s sarcoma.

Curiel Study Pursues Hormone Resistant Breast Cancer

Tyler Curiel, MD, MPH, Professor of Hematology and Medical Oncology, co-authored a study published in the December 2010 journal Cancer Research that may lead to new therapies using existing drugs to fight tumors that have become resistant to hormone therapy. Most breast cancers start off being sensitive to estrogen, which can stimulate the growth of certain tumors. In that state, they are relatively easy to treat with anti-estrogen agents. The researchers discovered the cancer is not fueled by estrogen after anti-hormone treatment. It is stimulated by a different signal and they have identified a protein in the body that gives that signal. The protein is called CXCL12. It sends a signal to a receptor, CXCR4, that makes the cell respond like it is getting estrogen when it is not. Hormonal therapies block estrogen signaling – but hormonal agents cannot block CXCL12 because it is not estrogen. So, this signal allows even tumors that no longer have the estrogen receptor to keep growing. The findings have many implications for treatment as well as better understanding of tumor growth and metastasis.

Thompson Publishes Opinion Piece in JAMA

Ian Thompson, MD, Director of the CTRC, coauthored an editorial in the December Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) on the benefits of active surveillance, instead of aggressive intervention, in men with low-risk prostate cancer. “The appeal of active surveillance is both the desire to avoid overtreatment and the concern about how treatment affects quality of life,” wrote Dr. Thompson and Laurence Klotz, MD, Chief of Urology at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre at the University of Toronto. They coauthored the editorial about the results of a study comparing active surveillance with initial treatment for men with low-risk prostate cancer, published in that issue of JAMA. That same week, Thompson was the lead in testimony before a Food and Drug Administration committee on cancer drugs. He supported a label change for the generic drug Finasteride to reflect the results of a large clinical trial, which found that the drug significantly reduces a man’s risk of developing prostate cancer.

Rosende New Executive Director

Carlos A. Rosende, MD, a specialist in diabetic retinopathy and general ophthalmology, has been appointed Vice Dean for Clinical Affairs and Executive Director of UT Medicine San Antonio. Rosende joined the faculty in 2007 and has served as Chair of the Department of Ophthalmology since 2007.

Mayes Leads Children’s Hospital Effort

Thomas Mayes, MD, Professor and Chair of Pediatrics, is leading an effort to build a new children’s hospital in San Antonio. The effort has garnered support on the local and state level, with a letter of intent signed by Bexar County in December, 2010. Mayes also serves as Physician-in-Chief at CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Children’s Hospital. A stand-alone children’s hospital has been a goal of his for nearly as long as he has been at the School of Medicine.

Senior Health Opens Downtown

In June 2010, UT Medicine opened its new “Senior Health Clinic” downtown specializing in geriatrics. Robert Parker, MD, a board-certified geriatrician and Professor of Family Medicine, is the Medical Director. The clinic will feature seven geriatricians and three nurse practitioners. “Our clinic is designed to help patients maintain function and independence as they age. We also work with the frail and elderly who are often on multiple medications from multiple specialists. Geriatrics is not just our focus at this clinic; it is the only thing we do,” Parker said. The clinicians also supervise the Acute Care for the Elderly (ACE) unit at CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Hospital, which is just across the street. The ACE unit is one of only three in the state and offers specialized inpatient care for the elderly. Any physician can admit a patient to the unit. The faculty geriatricians serve a supervisory role, assuring consistent and detailed care for all elderly patients. Visit www.UTMedSeniorHealth.org for more information, or call (210) 450-9890 for appointments or to refer patients.
Dermatology Expands Into the CTRC
After renovating a large area, including the construction of a dedicated Mohs Surgery Suite, the UT Medicine Dermatology practice has relocated from the MARC to the Cancer Therapy & Research Center (CTRC) just across the street. “The move was necessary to expand and offer the complete range of services our patients need,” said Sandra Osswald, MD, Professor and Division Chief for Dermatology. Osswald helped design the clinic layout, along with certified Mohs Surgeon, Bahar F Firoz, MD, Professor of Medicine in Dermatology. Firoz is one of the few certified Mohs surgeons in Central and South Texas. The clinic will feature a total of six dermatologists. Call 210-450-9840 for an appointment or to refer patients.

Pain Clinic Opens New Location in Medical Center
UT Medicine Pain Consultants have relocated to 5282 Medical Drive, Suite 614, which is on the sixth floor of the Westgate Medical Center at the corner of Medical Drive and Babcock Road. This new facility offers onsite physical therapy services, fluoroscopic and non-fluoroscopic procedure suites, increased clinic capacity for shorter wait times, and free parking. The clinic treats a wide variety of pain syndromes such as craniofacial, spine, abdominopelvic, joint, and extremity pain. They offer a variety of treatment modalities including joint mobilization, nerve/joint injections, and neuromodulation. The director of the clinic is renowned pain physician Dr. Somayaji Ramamurthy, who has more than 40 years of experience in pain medicine. Clinic physicians also include Maxim Eckmann, MD, Jon Vu, DO, Abdul Hayee, MD, and Manuel Ybarra, MD. All are ABA board certified in Anesthesiology and Pain Management. James Griffin, PT, is the clinic’s full time physical therapist. Call (210) 450-9850 to refer a patient or make an appointment.

Westover Hills: New Vascular Lab / Bariatric Services
Matthew Sideman, MD, Assistant Professor of Surgery, is the Medical Director for the new Vascular Lab at CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Hospital in Westover Hills. UT Medicine’s Westover Hills office is the outpatient clinic for Sideman. The Westover Hills Vascular Lab provides a full range of diagnostic testing, including peripheral arterial disease (PAD), cerebrovascular disease, deep venous thrombosis (DVT), renal artery disease, mesenteric arterial disease, aortic aneurysms, and chronic venous disease. Our Westover Hills office also offers family medicine, urology, cardiology, surgery and orthopedics. Call (210) 450-9900 for appointments or to refer patients.

Richard Peterson, MD, MPH, Director of the UT Center for Bariatric & Metabolic Surgery, will provide bariatric and other surgery services at Westover Hills CHRISTUS Santa Rosa. He is fellowship trained in bariatric surgery and leads a team of exemplary professionals focused on excellence in patient care. As a former consultant for Bariatric Surgery to the US Air Force Surgeon General, he brings a great deal of expertise and experience to UT Medicine, specializing in the following procedures: Roux-en-Y gastric bypass, Lap-Band®, laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy, and revision weight loss surgery. Dr. Peterson also provides the full spectrum of laparoscopic surgical care, including anti-reflux, solid organ and hernia surgery.

CTRC Receives LIVESTRONG® Grant
The Cancer Therapy & Research Center was named a LIVESTRONG Community Impact Project award recipient in November 2010. LIVESTRONG is the cancer advocacy organization formed by seven-time Tour de France winner and cancer survivor Lance Armstrong. The CTRC will use the $16,000 grant to create a LIVESTRONG Creative Arts Center with an artist in residence who will work with cancer patients. “We’ll use art in all sorts of ways to get patients to express themselves, to help them to relax,” said Mary Jackson, CTRC’s Director of Patient and Family Services. “They’ll use their own creative resources to meet the challenges of fighting and surviving cancer.” Community support was the key to winning the grant, Jackson said, as the CTRC won against several other qualifying candidates in a multistate region.
Clare Appointed Senior Associate Dean for Education
Nanette Clare, MD, has been appointed Senior Associate Dean for Education. Also a Professor of Pathology, she has served as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs since 1998.

Patterson Associate Dean of Lifelong Learning
Jan Patterson, MD, has been appointed Associate Dean for Quality and Lifelong Learning and will thus lead the School’s Continuing Medical Education efforts. As a Professor of Medicine and Pathology, she was the Director of the Center for Patient Safety and Health Policy in the School.

Shireman Associate Dean for Research
Paula Shireman, MD, MSc, Professor in the Department of Surgery, has been appointed Associate Dean for Research. Shireman is the Principal Investigator on an R01 grant from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health. Her focus is on aging, muscle regeneration, collateral artery formation, lower extremity bypass grafts, muscle regeneration and stem cells. She is board certified in both general and vascular surgery.

Leykum Appointed Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs
Luci Leykum, MD, MBA, MSc, was appointed Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs in June, 2010. She had served as Interim Dean since April 2009. In her current role, she works closely with the departments in the School and with our hospital partners— University Health System, CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Health System and the South Texas Veterans Health System— to improve and expand our clinical programs.

Calhoon Chair of New Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery
John Calhoon, MD, Professor of Surgery, was appointed to lead the new Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery, which was formerly a division of Surgery. A nationally recognized cardiothoracic surgeon, Calhoon heads a talented and dedicated group of faculty and staff providing state-of-the-art care, research, residency and a comprehensive array of other programs with School of Medicine partners. Visit UTCardiothoracicSurgery.com for more information.

Chalfin Named Acting Chair Ophthalmology
Steven Chalfin, MD, FACS, has been named Acting Chair for the Department of Ophthalmology. The former chair, Carlos Resende, MD, has taken the post of Vice Dean for Clinical Affairs. Chalfin is a Professor of Ophthalmology who joined the department full time in 2007 after serving as an Associate Professor of Surgery for the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland.

Peppas Named Acting Chair of Urology
Dennis Peppas, MD, Professor of Urology, has been appointed Acting Chair for the Department of Urology as former Chair, Ian Thompson, MD, will be moving full time to his position as Director of the Cancer Therapy & Research Center (CTRC). Peppas joined the faculty in 2004 after a distinguished career in the US Army where he was Chief of Urology at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Burge Appointed Interim Director for Student Research
Sandra Burge, PhD, was appointed Interim Director for Medical Student Research Programs. She is the Co-Principal Investigator on two grants – one for the Health Resources and Services Administration and the other for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Burge is a Professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine and the Director of the Residency Research Network of Texas (RRNet).
Nicolas Musi, MD, Associate Professor in the Department of Medicine, was appointed Director of the Center for Healthy Aging. The Center is focused on clinical research in aging, medical education in geriatrics, and clinical services for older adults. Musi was also named the Director of the Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center (GRECC). He is a principal investigator on grants from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), the National Institute on Aging (NIA), the American Federation for Aging Research and the American Diabetes Association.

Steven Pliszka, MD, has been selected by the Texas Society of Psychiatric Physicians (TSPP) as the winner of the 2010 TSPP Psychiatric Excellence Award, recognizing him for a “sustained and unusual degree of excellence in psychiatric endeavors.” He was given the award in a ceremony in November 2010 during the TSPP annual convention in San Antonio.

Darlene Metter, MD, Professor and Vice Chair for Clinical Education in the Department of Radiology, received the Tom Miller Memorial Award from the Society for Nuclear Medicine. She is also the Nuclear Medicine Program Director for the US Army, Air Force and the Health Science Center. Metter was also named a finalist in the TIAA-CREF Distinguished Medical Educator Awards in 2010.

Carlos Jaén, MD, Chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine, was elected in June 2010 to the Board of the American Board of Family Medicine, the second largest medical specialty board in the United States. In July, Jaén was also given the Presidential Award of Merit from the Texas Academy of Family Physicians. The award is given each year to a physician who has made great contributions to healthcare and family medicine. The award was presented at the organization’s 61st annual conference.

Sandra Adams, MD, MS, an Associate Professor of Medicine/Pulmonary, was selected to receive the American College of Chest Physicians GSK Distinguished Scholar Award. The award includes a three-year grant at $50,000 per year, which will allow her to develop a web-based education tool to disseminate best practice recommendations on Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) to primary-care physicians.

Basil Pruitt, MD, FACS, Professor of Trauma & Emergency Surgery, was selected as the first ever foreign honorary member of the Japanese Association for Acute Medicine (JAAM). One of the world’s leading burn-surgery experts, Dr. Pruitt has been a tireless advocate for burn patients and burn survivors for more than 50 years. Throughout his career, he has conducted clinical and laboratory research that has dramatically improved the treatment of burns, and he has published papers in all areas in which advancements have been made.

By decision of the University of Texas System Chancellor’s Office, Daniel Dent, MD, Professor of Trauma and Emergency Surgery, and Robert Esterl, MD, Professor of Surgery, Transplant, have been named Distinguished Teaching Professors.

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The IIMS is the academic home for the $26 million Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) received from the National Institutes of Health in 2008. Through a wide variety of programs, the Institute works to improve the translation of research findings from the lab bench to the bedside.

RESEARCH: the path to advancement.

When the new STRF opens, it will also open doors to all kinds of future research possibilities.

It is expected to lead to more, bigger and better grants. This is in part because of the caliber of researchers who will lead studies there, but also, the facility itself opens up new grant possibilities. Often, environment is a factor in scoring grants; granting agencies consider whether the environment is supportive and conducive to the research being proposed.

Research creates benefits on multiple levels. Scientists identify questions that need answers and secure funding to study the subject. Knowledge gets advanced and ultimately, patient care is improved.

In addition, research leads to growth, bringing revenue into the university system that paves the way for additional research. At the Health Science Center, a percentage of revenue generated by the research enterprise is returned to the schools to invest in faculty recruitment and retention, infrastructure, large equipment and other expenses that facilitate ongoing research.

Granting agencies typically acknowledge the indirect costs that the institution bears to support the research infrastructure, from building space to electricity to specific equipment. So, for example, if an investigator is awarded $100,000 for a research grant, the granting agency will typically provide an additional amount – in the case of NIH grants, the amount is 49 cents for each dollar – to the institution to cover indirect costs.

“Research creates new knowledge which obviously is going to benefit the human condition. In addition, it fosters growth and we can use these things to enhance the success of the research enterprise,” Herman says.

As an added bonus, when researchers move into the new STRF, additional space on campus will become available do develop new research activity or to enhance current programs.

“People are now going to vacate lab space on the main campus, and we can organize that lab space in a way that we make ‘STRFs’ all over the place,” Shireman says. “It’s an amazing opportunity to change the way we do research here.”

Much of the facility’s lab space will be flexible and allow for adaptation as needs change over time. Adjustable-height work surfaces and casework custom-designed by Rafael Viñoly Architects can be easily rearranged to accommodate different uses. It’s all part of creating a functional building that meets research needs today and can easily adapt to future needs.

“The things we need to fill this building may not have been discovered yet. Techniques that are important today won’t be important tomorrow,” says Dr. Paula Shireman, MD, Associate Dean for Research and Professor of Vascular/Endovascular Surgery in the School of Medicine. “Research is a moving target. We need to think about the next realm.”

Administrative offices and conference rooms occupy the third level, with the ground floor occupied by four small lobbies and elevators to the upper levels.

Technology will also promote communication among research teams throughout the building. The STRF will feature technology that doesn’t exist anywhere else on campus right now, including interactive collaborative hardware for video conferencing capabilities and the ability to work on manuscripts together from opposite ends of the building.

The building has eco-friendly features as well. Some of the building’s energy needs will be met by solar panels as part of a $2.1 million contribution from the CPS Energy Community Infrastructure and Economic Development (CIED) fund to support construction of the Medical Arts & Research Center (MARC) and the STRF. Construction follows the requirements of the U.S. Green Building Council and is designed to obtain LEED certification.

Designed with a gentle curve, the facility hugs the bend of Floyd Curl Drive, serving as an anchor and a gateway into the Greehey Academic and Research Campus. A common underground research facility links the STRF to the neighboring Greehey Children’s Cancer Research Institute.

Located directly across Floyd Curl Drive from the MARC, the STRF will help make clinical research easier and more convenient for researchers. While patients will not use the STRF, a physician could see a patient enrolled in a clinical trial at the MARC and take specimens back across the street to his or her lab at the STRF.

“This is going to be a great little neighborhood for lots of interactions that extend outside the building and not just within the building,” says Dr. David Weiss, Professor and Dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.

Funding for the $150 million building is as collaborative as the research is expected to be. Construction is supported by $60 million in tuition revenue bonds and $46 million in state permanent university funds. Part of a $25 million donation from The Greehey Family Foundation is also dedicated to the STRF. The remaining costs are covered by other private donations.
Win an alumni t-shirt, coffee mug and two free passes to Reunion Weekend 2011 if you can name the people in this photo and the event they are attending! Email your answer to medalumni@uthscsa.edu. The first correct respondent wins!

Save the Date!
Reunion Weekend 2011
October 20-22

Reunion Weekend 2011 will feature activities for all alumni and their families, including campus tours, presentations by medical students and the dean, CME courses, class dinners, and an Alumni Gala!

Online registration will begin in April. For more details, go to www.SAmedAlum.com
This is my valedictory address to the Alumni Association. I concluded my term at Reunion Weekend in October, leaving the Alumni Association in the able hands of our new president, Dr. Valerie Pronio-Stelluto ’90, our board of directors, the director of alumni relations, and an outstanding new dean.

Nothing in my professional career has been more enjoyable and fulfilling than serving as your president for the past four years. Thank you for this privilege.

I rejoin the alumni corps with a commitment to fulfill the admonition of the Association’s motto: **Stay Informed. Get Involved. Become Invested.** I commend this commitment to you. I look forward to receiving School of Medicine information by mail, e-mail, and website. I look forward to staying involved in the activities of the Alumni Association and in the School of Medicine as a mentor and host to students. I look forward to continuing to invest my energy, interest, and income in our School of Medicine.

Your Alumni Association has made great progress during the past year, but none so much as could be made with your involvement. Following are some of our highlights:

- In the first 16 months of the alumni initiative to transform the next generation of students, the Student Education Enhancement Fund received 69 gifts totaling more than $203,000. With that money, we built the new 1,500-square-foot Alumni Association Student Lounge and expanded the tutoring services we offer our medical students. In the coming year, we will use campaign funds to enhance the H-E-B Clinical Skills Center and increase student opportunities for summer research, community service learning initiatives in San Antonio, and medical outreach trips throughout Texas and around the world.

- After launching our first regional alumni chapter in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) in January, we held a reception last July at the Regional Academic Health Center in Harlingen. Sixty-five people attended the event, including 17 alumni and family members, 25 third-year students, and 23 faculty, staff, and family members. We plan to launch our next alumni chapter in San Antonio in 2011, so please contact the Alumni Relations Office if you are interested in participating in this effort.

- Also in July, we hosted our annual reception and dinner for the entering class of new students at Cha-Cha’s in San Antonio. More than 170 people attended this event, including 151 students and guests, 12 alumni, and 10 faculty and staff. The Cha-Cha’s dinner and the RGV reception support one of our key objectives: to host events at which alumni and students can enjoy the mutual benefits of interacting with each other. Students are always eager to learn more about alumni’s experiences in medical school, residency programs, and the real world of practicing medicine. Our alumni come away from such events energized by their discussions with students and encouraged about the future of medicine. Both alumni and students are able to establish valuable professional contacts that can last a lifetime.

- Another way we plan to bring students and alumni together is through the HOST (Help Our Students Travel) Program, in which alumni around the country assist students who are traveling to interview for residency programs in a variety of ways, including hosting them in their homes and helping them make valuable local contacts. In addition to serving as HOSTs, alumni can also mentor students, serve as guest speakers at student club gatherings, allow students to shadow them in their clinics, and work with students on community service learning initiatives.

The Alumni Association is also excited about the arrival of Francisco González-Scarano, MD, the new dean of the School of Medicine. We look forward to working closely with him to achieve our alumni objectives and, in so doing, advance the mission of the School. Our future is bright, but it will be even brighter with your presence and participation. I look forward to seeing you in the years to come.

**James L. Holly, MD ’73**
CEO, SETMA, LLP

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**In Memoriam**

Dr. Abraham Cano, former resident (age 67)
Dr. Daniel Carlisle ’91 (age 47)
Dr. Gabriel Garcia-Thomas ’91 (age 46)
Dr. Roger Gilbert Ramon ’80 (age 63)
Dr. Steven Sprague ’91 (age 45)
Reyes Receives Honor from Frisco (Texas) City Council

The Frisco City Council honored Dr. Paul H. Reyes ’01 by declaring December 2009 as Dr. Paul H. Reyes Day, thanks to a proclamation delivered at a city council meeting. Reyes serves in the voluntary role of medical director of the Frisco Cares Clinic and is also a partner in Stonebridge Pediatrics.

“Dr. Reyes has helped lead the Clinic from its modest beginnings—first in a mobile clinic van, then in borrowed space in the Primera Iglesia Bautista in Frisco—to its current location at 6811 Oak Street in Frisco,” according to the city’s proclamation. “His energy, professional guidance and ready smile have helped provide an extremely valuable service to the lives of families in our community.”

The Frisco Cares Clinic, established in 2005 by the Leadership Frisco Class No. 8, provides acute medical care and immunizations for uninsured children. It recently expanded hours and now treats uninsured adults as well. A majority of the clinic’s patients live in Frisco, but it also has patients from Plano, McKinney, Little Elm and Prosper.

Mobley Receives Award from Texas Academy of Family Physicians

Dr. James Mobley ‘73 receives the 2010 Public Health Award from TAFP President Melissa Gerdes, MD, of Whitehouse. The Texas Academy of Family Physicians presents this award each year to an individual who makes extraordinary contributions to the public health of Texas.

Dr. James A. Mobley ’73, a private practice physician in Portland, Texas, was named the 2010 recipient of the Texas Academy of Family Physicians Public Health Award during the organization’s 61st Annual Session and Scientific Assembly in San Antonio on July 24, 2010. The award recognizes individuals who are making extraordinary contributions to the public health of Texans.

Mobley has been in private practice since 1981 and has been the medical director of the San Patricio County Health Department since 1990. As medical director of the health department, he is responsible for all aspects of public health for the County through three public health clinics that handle a variety of issues, including animal control, food inspection, sanitation, tuberculosis control, the indigent health program for uninsured residents, immunizations, and emergency preparedness.

Last year, Mobley was appointed to the BoldFuture Coastal Bend task force. He currently chairs the Safe Healthy Communities Action Team, which is composed of leaders in law enforcement, fire safety, medicine and public health who are charged with developing strategic plans and implementation strategies for health and safety issues over the next five to 10 years.

A retired Brigadier General from the U.S. Army, Mobley has also been on the forefront of hurricane preparedness and response for his region and county, arranging for evacuation of the most vulnerable disabled, hospitalized and nursing home residents when hurricanes have threatened.

Valley Baptist-Harlingen Honors Castillo

Employees of Valley Baptist Medical Center in Harlingen, Texas, recently selected Dr. James W. Castillo as Physician of the Year. In nominating Castillo for the award, employees noted that Castillo’s “practice of medicine consistently reflects quality and holistic patient care—as well as courtesy and respect for patients, nurses, and staff members.” Hospital employees also described Castillo as a team player, taking time to provide valuable information on efforts to improve quality at the hospital. Castillo, completed his internal medicine residency in 2005 at the School of Medicine’s Regional Academic Health Center (RAHC) in Harlingen.

Molina Healthcare of Texas Names Lawrence as Medical Director

In April 2010, Molina Healthcare of Texas named Dr. Courtney Lawrence ’90 as its medical director. In her new role, Lawrence will be responsible for utilization management and coordination of care for Texas members.

Lawrence has 15 years of experience as a general pediatrician, including 13 years in San Antonio. She continues to see patients at Santa Rosa Children’s Emergency Room. Previously, she was a pediatrician for South Texas Center for Pediatric Care.

“We’re thrilled to have Dr. Lawrence on the team,” said Dr. Robert Hilliard ’94, chief medical officer for Molina Healthcare of Texas. “Her knowledge and experience in pediatrics will play an important role in making decisions that positively affect our largest population—children and their mothers.”
Ngo Receives Award from American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer

Dr. Rick Q. Ngo ’88, a Cancer Liaison Physician (CLP) at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Hospital in Houston and a board member at the American Cancer Society High Plains Division, received an Outstanding Performance Award from the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC) in 2009. Ngo was one of 36 CLPs to receive this award for going above and beyond the scope of the normal duties of serving as a liaison between the cancer programs at their hospitals and the CoC.

As a CLP, Ngo is serving a three-year appointment and is among a national network of more than 1,600 volunteer physicians who are responsible for providing leadership and direction to establish, maintain and support their facility’s cancer program. CLPs are an integral part of cancer programs accredited by the CoC. Specifically, Ngo is responsible for spearheading CoC initiatives within his hospital’s cancer program; collaborating with local agencies, such as the American Cancer Society; and facilitating quality improvement initiatives utilizing data submitted to the CoC’s National Cancer Database (NCDB).

Pronio-Stelluto Receives Best Clinical Instructor and Humanism in Medicine Awards

At the Harvard Medical School Commencement Ceremony this spring, Dr. Valerie Pronio-Stelluto ’90 received the 2010 Leonard Tow Gold Foundation Humanism in Medicine Award as well as the award for the Best Clinical Instructor at Mount Auburn Hospital. In addition, at the Harvard Medical School Teaching Awards Celebration, she was named the 2010 Harvard Medical School Nominee for the AAMC “Humanism in Medicine Award.” Among her other honors, she is the 2009 recipient of the National American Colleges of Physicians “Herbert S. Waxman Outstanding Medical Student Educator” Award.

The Gold Humanism in Medicine Award is bestowed each year upon the Harvard Medical School faculty member who most consistently demonstrates compassion and empathy in the delivery of care to patients, serves as role model and illustrates professional behavior by example, is approachable and accessible to students, welcomes opportunities for teaching and one-on-one mentorships with students, exhibits enthusiasm and skill in professional and personal interactions with students, shows respect for everyone, demonstrates cultural sensitivity and displays effective communication and listening skills.

In nominating Pronio-Stelluto for the Best Clinical Instructor honor, members of the Class of 2010 wrote: “Our class believes that your passion for medical student education, your endless enthusiasm for teaching, and your deep concern for students have allowed you to stand out among our excellent faculty.”

Pronio-Stelluto is Assistant Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and director of Medical Student Education at Mount Auburn Hospital. She is also class agent for the Class of 1990 and the new President of the School of Medicine Alumni Association at the Health Science Center.

Fox Named Dallas Business Journal’s 2010 Health Care Quality Hero

In May, the Dallas Business Journal recognized Dr. Murray E. Fox ’71 as its Health Care Quality Hero for 2010. Fox was selected by a panel of editors from the journal out of more than 110 nominations. The editors noted his significant contributions toward improving health care services in North Texas, his leadership in building and enhancing the Plano Physicians’ Group and the Patient Physician Network, and his vision and commitment to re-engineering the health care delivery system through the organization’s clinical integration program.

Since 1996, Fox has worked tirelessly with other medical leaders to develop and organize the Patient Physician Network, whose initial focus was to respond proactively to managed care. Serving as the organization’s first and only President and CEO and as a member of the Board of Directors, he led an effort to educate healthcare consumers on quality of care issues in terms of cost, utilization and outcomes. He also helped create the Collin County Employer Health Forum, which brings employers and health professionals together to review and discuss health care issues, primary reasons for cost increases and health benefit alternatives.

Since 1976, Fox has practiced obstetrics and gynecology in Plano, Texas, where he co-founded Physicians for Plano, an organization providing care for indigent citizens in Collin County. For the past seven years, he has led a medical mission team to Antigua, Guatemala, on behalf of Faith in Practice, a nonprofit organization based in Houston.
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Alumni News

Vision Awards the First O’Donnell Visionary Scholarship

In May, rgVision magazine announced the recipient of its first O’Donnell Visionary Scholarship Award. Veronica Pena, a San Benito High School graduate who plans to pursue a degree in psychology from the University of Texas at Pan Am, received a $2,100 scholarship. Named after Dr. Brian O’Donnell ’99, the award recognizes high school students in the Rio Grande Valley who have demonstrated the leadership skills necessary to inspire, educate and inform other members of their community. After earning his medical degree from the UT Health Science Center San Antonio, O’Donnell completed the residency program in family medicine in Harlingen. He is currently medical director at Family Practice Associates in Harlingen.

Hwang Receives Fourth Board Certification

In April, Dr. William J. Hwang ’90 passed the board exams in Sleep Medicine by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. He is also board certified in Neurology, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and Pain Medicine. “Holding board certifications in four specialties is something I’m extremely proud of,” said Hwang. “Each one adds a new level of knowledge, aiding my ability to diagnose patients and recommend a treatment to wellness.” One of the few physicians in the country who hold more than two board certifications, Hwang has cared for patients through his private practice in Dallas for 13 years.

Holly Selected to Serve on HIMSS Steering Committee

In 2010, Dr. James L. Holly ’73 was selected to serve on the HIMSS Patient Safety & Quality Outcomes Steering Committee. The Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) is a healthcare-stakeholder membership organization exclusively focused on providing global leadership for the optimal use of information technology and management systems for the betterment of healthcare.

In addition to serving as president of the School of Medicine Alumni Association from 2006 to 2010, Holly is CEO and managing partner of Southeast Texas Medical Associates (SETMA), a multi-specialty clinic with three clinical locations in Beaumont, Texas. SETMA is widely recognized as a leader in the use of electronic medical record (EMR) to achieve more efficient, higher-quality patient care.

Alumni Association Sponsors Women in Medicine & Law Dinner

The School of Medicine Alumni Association once again sponsored a table at the 2010 Women in Medicine & Law For the Cure Dinner. The event, which took place on April 29 at the Holy Trinity Banquet Hall in San Antonio, benefits Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

Alumni Association Donates Gifts for Children During the Holidays

On Thursday night, December 2, the School of Medicine Alumni Association hosted its “Connect the Docs” Holiday Reception for local alumni. Thirty-five alumni and guests attended the event at Oak Hills Country Club, donating 28 gifts to the UT Health Science Center’s annual Gifts for Children holiday service project. The project provides gifts for hospitalized children receiving care at university-related hospitals and clinics, including University Hospital. These presents were delivered to hospitalized children over the December holidays.
Alumni Association Enhances Online Resources for Alumni

The Alumni Association recently redesigned its website to be more functional and visually appealing. Through these enhancements, we hope to provide our graduates with a more convenient, interesting and compelling online experience.

Visual enhancements include a large rotating photo banner as well as more colorful accent bars and interactive buttons.

Prominent links below photo banner allow you to register for CME, view photos from alumni events, request transcripts and other official documents, and tap into library resources.

New links enable you to purchase alumni gear, join our Facebook group, and tap into HSCConnect, our new online community for alumni and friends.

Upcoming Events column gives you a snapshot of alumni receptions and activities, including those hosted by the Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics.
HSConnect
Finally! Your Alumni Association is delivering the kind of online alumni community you’ve come to expect from institutions of higher learning. It’s called HSConnect. But you must register on the new site in order to take full advantage of everything it has to offer.

Here’s how to register:
1. Go to www.SAmedAlum.com and click on the HSConnect button on the lefthand side of the page.
2. Once you are on the HSConnect homepage (be sure to bookmark it for future use), click on the registration link.
3. That will take you to a page where you will need to provide some basic contact information as well as enter a User ID and Password.
4. After you click the Submit button, it will take up to 48 hours for our Administrator to verify your account registration. You will receive a confirmation email once this happens. From that point on, you will be able to go straight to the HSConnect Login page and enter your User ID and Password for access.

Alumni Directory: Reconnect with your classmates and expand your network of professional referrals.

Class Notes: Read the latest updates on your friends and update your own class note online.

Online Giving: Give to specific programs, departments or research projects that interest you — in a safe and secure online environment.

Other key features include:
My Profile: Update your online profile and determine which information other registered users can see.
My Giving History: View a record of your past gifts to help you decide which programs to support in the future.
E-mail Updates and E-newsletters: Receive the latest news about the Alumni Association and School of Medicine.

Register now to take advantage of this new online resource!
Alumni Association Completes Successful First Year of Initiative to Transform the Next Generation of Medical Students

From a brand-new student lounge to expanded opportunities to put knowledge to work in the community, School of Medicine students are benefiting greatly from the generosity of alumni.

At the end of August, the School of Medicine Alumni Association completed the first year of a five-year $1.2 million initiative to transform the educational experience of students. Eighty-nine alumni and friends of the school have pledged more than $203,000 to the Student Education Enhancement Fund as of December 1, 2010.

The money will go toward:

- Increased opportunities for students to pursue summer research projects, community service programs, and medical outreach trips, allowing them to take what they learn in the classroom and apply it in laboratories, as well as in communities in San Antonio and throughout the world.
- Academic programs and capital projects that directly impact students’ education, such as expanded tutoring services and enhancements to the H-E-B Clinical Skills Center.
- A 1,500-square-foot student lounge for club meetings, group study, relaxation, recreation and student-alumni receptions. The Alumni Association Student Lounge opened to students in July, with an alumni celebration in September.

New! Alumni Class Endowed Scholarships

In addition to the Student Education Enhancement Fund, the Alumni Association recently launched a new program through which alumni can support endowed scholarship funds named in honor of their graduating classes. The Alumni Class Endowed Scholarship Program was established with two $25,000 gifts from Dr. Larry Holly ‘73. These gifts established the Class of 1973 Endowed Scholarship and the Class of 2010 Endowed Scholarship. By enabling the School to attract and retain the best and brightest students, these new scholarships will elevate the quality of the educational experience for all medical students.

As of December 1, 2010, 15 alumni have made gifts to their respective class endowed scholarships, totaling more than $58,000.

Dr. Aaron Angel ‘85
Dr. Lane Childs ‘87
Dr. Nan Clare ‘75
Dr. Jill Henke ‘01
Dr. Louis Hill ‘75
Dr. Joseph Hoang ‘89
Dr. Larry Holly ‘73
Dr. Michael Iversen ‘89
Dr. Daniel Johnson ‘73
Col. James Leech, MD ‘82
Dr. Randolph T. Leone ‘89
Dr. Christa J. Mars ‘76
Dr. Neal Snebold ‘79
Dr. Michelle Taylor ‘02
Dr. Roy Trawick ‘93

Alumni who make gifts after December 1, 2010 will be recognized in an upcoming issue of FUTURE magazine.
Alumni and friends interested in supporting the Student Education Enhancement Fund or the Alumni Class Endowed Scholarship Program can donate online. To make a gift or find out more, go to www.SAmedAlum.com and click on Give to the School of Medicine link. Or call David Perryman, Director of Alumni Relations for the School of Medicine, at 210-567-4400.

The Student Education Enhancement Fund will help enhance the H-E-B Clinical Skills Center and provide students with more opportunities to pursue medical mission trips, community service programs, summer research projects and tutoring services.

List of Donors to the Student Education Enhancement Fund (as of December 1, 2010)

**Founder**
Dr. James L. Holly ’73  
Dr. and Mrs. William L. Henrich

**Fellow**
Dr. Valerie Pronio-Stelluto ’90  
Dr. Keith G. Saxon ’77

**Mentor**
Dr. Juan A. Bonilla ’83  
Dr. Michael W. Brennan ’78  
Dr. Richard T. Donahue ’84  
Dr. Glenn A. Haff  
Dr. Russell S. Hirata ’87  
Dr. Allison Yee (Residency)

**Partner**
Class of 2010  
Class of 2006  
Dr. Richard A. Becker ’71  
Dr. Carol Dornbluth ’75 and Dr. Don Howe ’75  
Dr. Donald J. Dudley ’84 and Dr. Helen Meaney Dudley ’84  
Dr. David A. Flack ’83  
Dr. Robert S. Hamilton ’75  
Dr. Randolph T. Leone ’89  
Dr. Paul E. Tullar, Jr. ’77

**Friend**
Dr. Manuel T. Amendo ’70  
Dr. Christine A. Andre ’00  
Dr. Aaron L. Angel ’85  
Mrs. Chrissy Anthony  
Dr. Perry Bassett ’95  
Dr. John E. Bishop ’80  
Dr. Susan D. Boulware ’84  
Dr. Pamela Camosy ’80  
Dr. Robert L. Cantrell ’80  
Dr. Eben Carsey, Jr. ’73  
Dr. Theresa Ortega Castillo ’02  
Dr. Jason Chi-Man Cheung ’01  
Dr. Nan Clare ’75  
Dr. Nancy Whipple Collins ’83  
Dr. Craig O. Daniel ’86  
Dr. Thomas R. Drake ’96  
Dr. Cecilia Moss Etheridge ’77  
Dr. Michele Fang ’89  
Dr. Autumn D. Galtbreath ’96  
Dr. Cameron D. Godfrey ’80  
Dr. Francisco Gonzalez-Scarano  
Dr. David K. Gregory ’80  
Dr. Jule Griebok-Assercq ’90  
Dr. Wesley Harden ’09 and Dr. Jeanie Kim ’09  
Dr. Eric Pui Sun Ho ’86  
Dr. Stephen D. Houston ’73  
Dr. J. Daniel Johnson ’83  
Dr. and Mrs. Robert L. Jones  
Dr. Jeanie Kim ’09  
Dr. Eric Kraus ’74  
Dr. Mark Kutler ’80  
Dr. Vivian Lim ’85  
Dr. Coleen (Grillo) Madigan ’80  
Dr. Steven Mays ’94  
Dr. Kristin McCabe-Kline ’02  
Dr. John W. McConnell ’78  
Dr. Donald McCurnin ’80  
Dr. Javier Medina (Residency)  
Lt. Col. Jeffrey J. Meffert, MD ’81 and Dr. Paula M. Lyons ’81  
Dr. Ronald Miller ’91  
Dr. Rick Q. Ngo ’98  
Dr. Patrick Nguyen ’04  
Dr. Patrick M. Palmer ’73  
Dr. Dimitrios Pavavassiliou (Residency)  
Dr. Jacob F. Patterson ’82  
Mr. David E. Perryman  
Dr. Delbert E. Rainosek ’83  
Dr. Elizabeth A. Reiley ’81  
Dr. David S. Rosenberg ’72  
Dr. Carl Rountree ’00  
Dr. Thomas Ruhnke ’89  
Dr. Joyce G. Schwartz ’80  
Dr. Scott Smith ’83  
Dr. Steven P. Sparagana ’89  
Dr. Barry Steckler ’75  
Dr. Randall Stenoien ’84  
Dr. and Mrs. Jay Teng  
Dr. Gisela Maria Triana ’80  
Dr. John Troiani ’87  
Dr. Miriam L. Vishny ’86  
Dr. Lewis P. Walker ’80  
Dr. Gary W. Wallace ’89  
Dr. Martha Webber ’80  
Dr. Lucas Wong ’88 and Dr. Lisa J. Go ’96  
Dr. James Wyrick ’93

**Classes with Most Donors** (as of Dec. 1, 2010)
Following are the classes with the most donors to the Student Education Enhancement Fund.

**First Place**
Class of 1980, with 12 donors

**Second Place**
Class of 1983, with six donors

**Third Place**
Three-way tie between Class of 1975, Class of 1984 and Class of 1989, each with five donors

**Note:** For an up-to-date listing of donors to the Student Education Enhancement Fund and Alumni Class Endowed Scholarships, go to www.SAmedAlum.com and look in the “Invested” section. Alumni who make gifts after December 1, 2010 will be recognized in an upcoming issue of FUTURE magazine.
Growing up in a family of lawyers, Dr. Michael Iversen '89 had always planned to go to law school. But then one night as a sophomore at the University of Texas in Austin, all that changed. “I was watching M*A*S*H,” Iversen said, “and it suddenly struck me that I wanted to study medicine.” He promptly changed his major to biology, and after two more years of studying and 180 hours of college credit, he was ready for medical school.

A number of factors attracted Iversen to the School of Medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. “I already had one child by the time I entered medical school, and I had another in my third year. So the fact that it was a family-friendly school was important to me. In addition, it had a great campus and was located in a city that offered cultural opportunities and many things to do nearby,” he remarked.

During his medical school experience, Iversen acquired a number of important skills to complement his medical knowledge, including how to persevere, be patient, and go without sleep for long stretches of time. “There were many professors who contributed to my development — some in small ways and others to a larger degree,” he noted. “Dr. Carlos Pestana and Dr. Dan Steale, my advisor, are two who stand out in my mind.”

Despite the long hours and rigorous coursework, Iversen remembers fondly his overall medical school experience, noting in particular, the camaraderie that developed among students. “I would have to say that the weekend after Phase Week is one of my favorite memories,” he said. “It was a break in our lives when we could breathe, relax and enjoy life for three days.”

Following medical school, Iversen did his residency in family medicine at UT Southwestern, McLennan County Medical Education and Research Foundation (MCMERF) in Waco, Texas. He then ran a private family practice for a few years and still found time to work in the emergency room (ER). After managed care underwent major changes in the late 1990s, he returned to full-time ER medicine.

Several years later, he had an experience as a patient that changed his approach to practicing medicine. “In 2003, I suffered a retinal detachment,” Iversen noted. “At one of the leading hospitals in Dallas, I had to wait three hours in a doctor’s office, which was filled with the smell of burnt coffee and the sound of blaring televisions. It was a horrible experience.” As unsettling as it was, the ordeal helped bring to light the far-reaching negative effects of making patients wait. “It’s bad for the morale of physicians and staff, bad for the bottom line, and — most importantly — bad for patients,” he said.

Following his eye injury, Iversen became interested in developing a more effective and satisfying model for urgent care. While working at a clinic in Fort Worth between ER jobs, he began brainstorming about what the perfect clinic would look like. In 2007, he launched Urgent Doc in Lufkin, Texas, providing urgent care medical services, family medical services, and occupational medicine. Since that time, he has opened new clinics in Livingston and Nacogdoches. Urgent Doc was the first urgent care clinic in Texas and the eighth in the nation to earn The Joint Commission National Quality Approval’s Gold Certification.

“We have thought about every aspect of the customer experience — from the time patients enter the clinic, to the greeting at the front desk, the flow through the clinic and the check-out and departure,” Iversen said. “By not cutting any corners, we have created an environment that maximizes convenience and quality for the patients as well as efficiency for staff and providers.” Urgent Doc uses a range of tools and resources to ensure this high-quality experience, including computer tablets for EMRs based on point-and-click tables, digital X-rays, a floor plan that works well for a high volume of patients, flat screen TVs in the waiting room and exam rooms that play G-rated movies, and good coffee and cookies.

Another key to the success of Urgent Doc is the incentive structure Iversen has created for physicians and staff, which includes comprehensive medical, dental and retirement benefits along with a generous bonus plan based on patients’ “door-to-door” time, the number of patients seen, collections, and
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patient satisfaction. “Any score lower than 98 percent customer satisfaction voids the bonus,” Iversen noted. “And since every employee is a full member of our team, we pay the same bonus to everyone, which equates to roughly 100 to 150 hours worth of their pay each quarter. Because the bonus is the same for the entire team, the pressure to perform is shared by everyone equally.”

Looking to the future, Iversen is exhilarated by the opportunity for Urgent Doc to become the first line of primary care because of the clinics’ convenient hours, services offered and transparent cost structure. “We are pleased by the East Texas community’s acceptance of Urgent Doc,” he said. “Creating the clinics has been rewarding because it has allowed me to practice good medicine, work reasonable hours and shed the old dogma that it is a privilege for the patients to see us. Rather, it is a privilege for us to be able do what we enjoy while providing the public with much needed urgent care.” But despite the success of Urgent Doc, Iversen is not blind to the potential pitfalls that could lie ahead. “Our biggest challenges will be to keep current and open to what the customer base needs and wants, to adapt to competition and to manage the inevitable changes in regulations and business practices.”

Twenty-one years after graduating from the School of Medicine, Iversen has set a new standard for urgent care medicine and built his dream ranch, where he enjoys pursuing hobbies such as team roping, photography, wood-working, training bird dogs and proper pasture management for his cattle and horses. From a distance of more than two decades, he offered career advice to those students who are just embarking upon their medical studies: “First, do what you love. You will never be good at something you don’t love doing. Next, grow as a human being — always strive to grow your soul and body as much as your mind. Remember, you have been given the gift of having learned how to learn; use it daily. Challenge yourself to learn something new every year far removed from medicine.”

Nominate a Classmate for the 2011 Distinguished Alumni Award

The Alumni Relations Office is calling for nominations for the 2011 Distinguished Alumni Award. To nominate someone, go to www.SAmedAlum.com and follow the Awards and Scholarships link to the Distinguished Alumni Award page. You can also contact the Alumni Relations Office at medalumni@uthscsa.edu or 210-567-0614. The deadline for nominations is May 31, 2011.

Isn’t it about time you got engaged?

- Host fourth-year students when they travel for their residency interviews.
- Mentor medical students or let them shadow you in your clinic.
- Work side-by-side with students on community service projects.
- Host an alumni gathering in your city.
- Serve as a class agent for Reunion Weekend.

To find out more, go to www.SAmedAlum.com.
Transforming the next generation

In August 2009, the School of Medicine Alumni Association embarked on a five-year $1.2 million initiative to transform the educational experience for the next generation of medical students. The plan involves three steps:

1) Build a place for students to meet, study, relax, and recreate
   Conveniently located on the second floor of the School of Medicine, the new 1,500-square-foot Alumni Association Student Lounge supports club meetings, group study sessions, informal relaxation and recreation, and student-alumni receptions.

2) Increase opportunities for students to apply lessons learned in class to the lab, the community, and the world
   More students will be able to participate in summer research projects, structured community service programs and medical outreach trips throughout Texas and across the globe.

3) Provide resources and tools that enrich students’ educational experience
   By funding academic programs and capital projects such as expanded tutoring services and enhancements to the H-E-B Clinical Skills Center, the campaign will deepen students’ knowledge of medicine while honing their ability to practice it.

Pledge Your Support
If you would like to be a part of this exciting transformation:
1) Go to www.SAmEdAlum.com
2) Click on “Give to the School of Medicine”
3) Or call us at (210) 567-0614
Ours is a story of hope. Compassion and joy. Commitment, vision and inspiration. We engage our minds and talents, and give from our hearts, to help and heal. We touch the lives of thousands, to serve those in need, here and around the world. And, through it all, we work to make lives better.

Thank you for all you do to make our story so remarkable. You’re the reason we’re able to write the next chapter.
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UT Medicine San Antonio
Medical Arts & Research Center

UT Medicine San Antonio offers the power of academic medicine from our medical school faculty and the convenience of a private practice setting at the Medical Arts & Research Center in San Antonio’s Medical Center.

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Imaging Center
Infectious Diseases
Internal Medicine
Lab Services
Musculoskeletal Institute
Nephrology
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Neuro Ophthalmology
Obstetrics & Gynecology
Ophthalmology
Orthopaedics
Otolaryngology
Pancreas Center
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