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On the Cover

In this month's cover story, *The POST* gives you a closer look at the HSC experts who spend their days solving mysteries, from uncovering why a person died to finding a deadly illness.
Photo by Czerne M. Reid



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Harlem Globetrotters

What does The Gator Nation mean to 20 students and a teacher from the Roberto Clemente Intermediate School in Harlem, N.Y.? A lot. Teacher Keith Robinson raised \$20,000 to bring his students to the UF campus for a four-day tour March 29. A UF alumnus, Robinson used Tim Tebow's "Promise" speech to inspire students in his class and wanted to bring them to the campus to encourage them to finish high school and go to college. During their tour, the students got a sneak peek inside an operating room at the Shands at UF South Campus. To see more photos from the students' time on campus, visit www.urel.ufl.edu/production/photography/multimedia.html. To view a video explaining the class's journey, visit <http://tinyurl.com/yzewggx>. **P**

IT'S A REALLY BIG BOOK

It weighs just under 12 pounds, spans 2,765 pages and has become somewhat of a UF tradition. First published in 1988 and recently released in its fourth edition, "Civetta, Taylor and Kirby's Critical Care" is the leading text on critical care medicine and exhaustively covers issues affecting the care of patients in intensive care. All but one of the editors of the book trained or practiced at UF, and 80 UF faculty and affiliates have contributed chapters to the mammoth text. Following in the footsteps of their mentors, Civetta, Taylor and Kirby, UF's Andrea Gabrielli, M.D., and Joseph Layon, M.D., (from left) join the University of Hawaii's Mihae Yu, M.D., as the book's new editors. Gabrielli, Layon and Yu took over when their mentors passed on the offer from the publisher to work on a fourth edition more than two decades after they began the first. "We said 'no thanks, we've had enough fun,'" said Robert R. Kirby, M.D., now a professor emeritus at UF. "We were so impressed with their book — they improved all three of ours by an order of magnitude." The 178-chapter book adds 30 new topics, including bioterrorism, nutrition, disaster response, pandemic infections and use of technology in the intensive care unit. Luckily, the weighty tome comes with a code that gives owners access to the full text online. So the book at once addresses the needs of people who look first to the Internet for information and those who want a comprehensive hard copy on their desks.

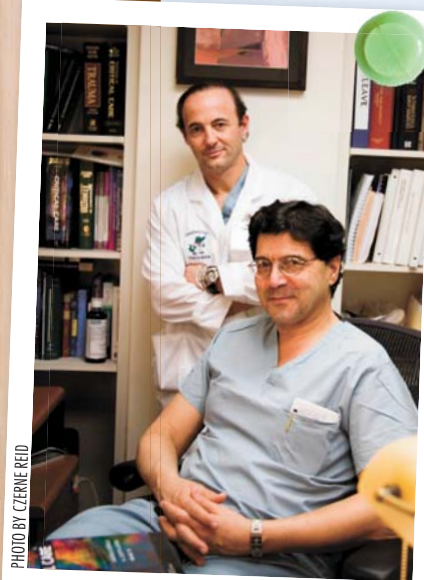


PHOTO BY CZERNIE RED



PHOTO BY ALLEN CHEVRONT

BUILDING BIOMEDICINE

Collaboration among the sciences fosters creative solutions for many of today's problems. Come celebrate the opening of the Biomedical Sciences Building, a \$90 million, 160,000-square-foot interdisciplinary facility at UF that houses researchers affiliated with the College of Medicine, the College of Public Health and Health Professions, and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, as well as the research and administrative operations of the College of Engineering's J. Crayton Pruitt Family Department of Biomedical Engineering. The celebration begins at 12:15 p.m. May 11 in the HPNP auditorium. Speakers include Francine R. Kaufman, M.D., chief medical officer and vice president of Medtronic Diabetes, and Rod Pettigrew, Ph.D., M.D., director of the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering. Following these speakers, the building dedication will be held at 2 p.m. Tours of the building will follow the event.



PHOTO BY APRIL FRAWLEY BIRDWELL

DR. ROCK

So you knew anesthesiologists could keep patients safe and pain-free during surgery and perform epidurals before childbirth, but what about their ability to play a piece by Schubert on the violin? On March 30, a handful of UF doctors decided to show off their non-medical talents during the Physician's Talent Showcase. The event was held to celebrate Doctor's Day and featured performances by William Donnelly, M.D., Robert Averbuch, M.D., Michael Mahla, M.D., Everett Petersen, M.D., (shown here with Mahla behind the piano), Stephen Hsu, M.D., Ph.D., William Slayton, M.D., Li-Ming Su, M.D., Rathika Nimalendran, Scott Denardo, M.D., and Shands Arts in Medicine musician Cathy DeWitt.



GET FIT

Ready to pump a little iron, work those abs and get fit "Biggest Loser"-style? Starting in May, Shands HealthCare and UF employees will have access to the same Star Trac cardio and strength training machines used on the popular NBC show at the new Shands Fitness and Wellness Center, located in the Shands at UF South Campus parking garage on Southwest 13th Street. Each cardio machine has an embedded TV screen, and all of the strength machines adjust easily to suit every individual. Also on hand will be the fitness center's exercise specialists, who all have degrees in exercise science and will be available to help members with their workouts. Membership fees are \$45 a month or \$240 for six months (\$40 a month). The center's \$50 initiation fee will be reduced to only \$25 from April 1 to April 30. For more information, please visit shands.org/fitnessandwellnesscenter or contact Mike Wasik at 352-273-7117 or wasikm@shands.ufl.edu.

UF

Story by Karen Dooley Photos by Priscilla Santos

And the envelope, please . . .

Medical students match to residencies

Tony Bryant's legs were shaking as he walked up to the podium.

"When you tell yourself you're going to get your first choice, all of sudden you realize anything else will be a disappointment," he said.

He wasn't disappointed.

The fourth-year UF medical student matched to his first choice. He will begin a residency in orthopedic surgery at UF in July.

Bryant and 125 of his classmates from the College of Medicine class of 2010 learned where they will complete their residency training during the college's annual Match Day ceremony, held at the Reitz Union March 18. The National Resident Matching Program matches prospective residents to residencies using a mathematical algorithm that compiles students' and institutions' top choices. The decision is pivotal for medical students and determines not only where they will complete their residencies but also what specialties they will enter.

Bryant and his wife, Codie, who are expecting their first child in about five months, couldn't help but celebrate after learning where Tony will train and where the couple will begin their new family.

"It was such a relief to get the answer I was hoping for," said Bryant, who chose to open his match envelope while on stage rather than looking before he was called. "You have to open it up in front of the class. There's no other way to do it."

One of the most popular programs among this year's class was emergency medicine, with 13 or 10.3 percent of the class entering the field. Emergency medicine has become a popular specialty because of its better-defined lifestyle, explained Patrick Duff, M.D., the college's associate dean for student affairs.

Eleven students chose to enter the field of obstetrics/gynecology, or 8.7 percent of the class, which is higher than the national average of about 6 percent.

"The number is encouraging because in the past some students have stayed away from this specialty due to concerns about erratic lifestyle and malpractice," said Duff, a practicing obstetrician.

Thirty-two UF medical students will remain in Florida for their residencies, including 17 at UF in Gainesville and two in Jacksonville. It was a very successful match for UF programs as well as students, with 151 new residents starting their training in Gainesville and 71 at the regional campus in Jacksonville beginning in July. **P**



UF names CTSI director

By Czerne M. Reid

David Nelson, M.D., has been named director of the UF Clinical and Translational Science Institute.

Nelson, a professor of medicine and a leader in liver transplantation and hepatology at the College of Medicine, is engaged in multidisciplinary approaches to improve translational research and patient care. He has forged numerous collaborations with researchers across UF and the state, as well as with leaders in industry.

He brings to the new position a commitment to further the institute's goals of speeding new treatments to patients and producing a highly trained force of researchers and physicians.

"The goal is to make the current clinical and translational researchers here more productive and efficient in their efforts," Nelson said. "We want to become the mechanism to integrate a very talented and diverse research community at the university."

The institute's success will in large measure be determined by its ability to attract additional research funding.

UF won a competitive Clinical and Translational Science Award last year from the National Institutes of Health. The \$26 million award over five years will help lay a framework for accelerating the progress of translational research and medical advances at the university. The institute, a partnership of several colleges and entities within the university and in the community, also is supported by \$23 million from the UF Office of Research and \$70 million in commitments from the College of Medicine.

Nelson, whose clinical expertise is in hepatology with an emphasis on the



DAVID NELSON, M.D.

management of viral hepatitis and liver cancer, will continue to see patients and remain active in teaching and in mentoring and training gastrointestinal and liver program fellows.

He also will continue his research on hepatobiliary diseases. He has led development of initiatives such as a unique liver cancer clinic in which hepatologists play a key role in cancer management, delicately balancing treatment of cancer with that of underlying liver disease that can worsen as a result of cancer treatment.

"Dr. Nelson has significant experience leading translational research within his own field and has been a major contributor to the development of the University of Florida's CTSI," said Win Phillips, UF's vice president for research. "His leadership skills make him an excellent choice as director of the CTSI as it moves forward." **P**

PHHP names new leader for research, planning

By Jill Pease



KRISTA VANDENBORNE, PH.D., P.T.

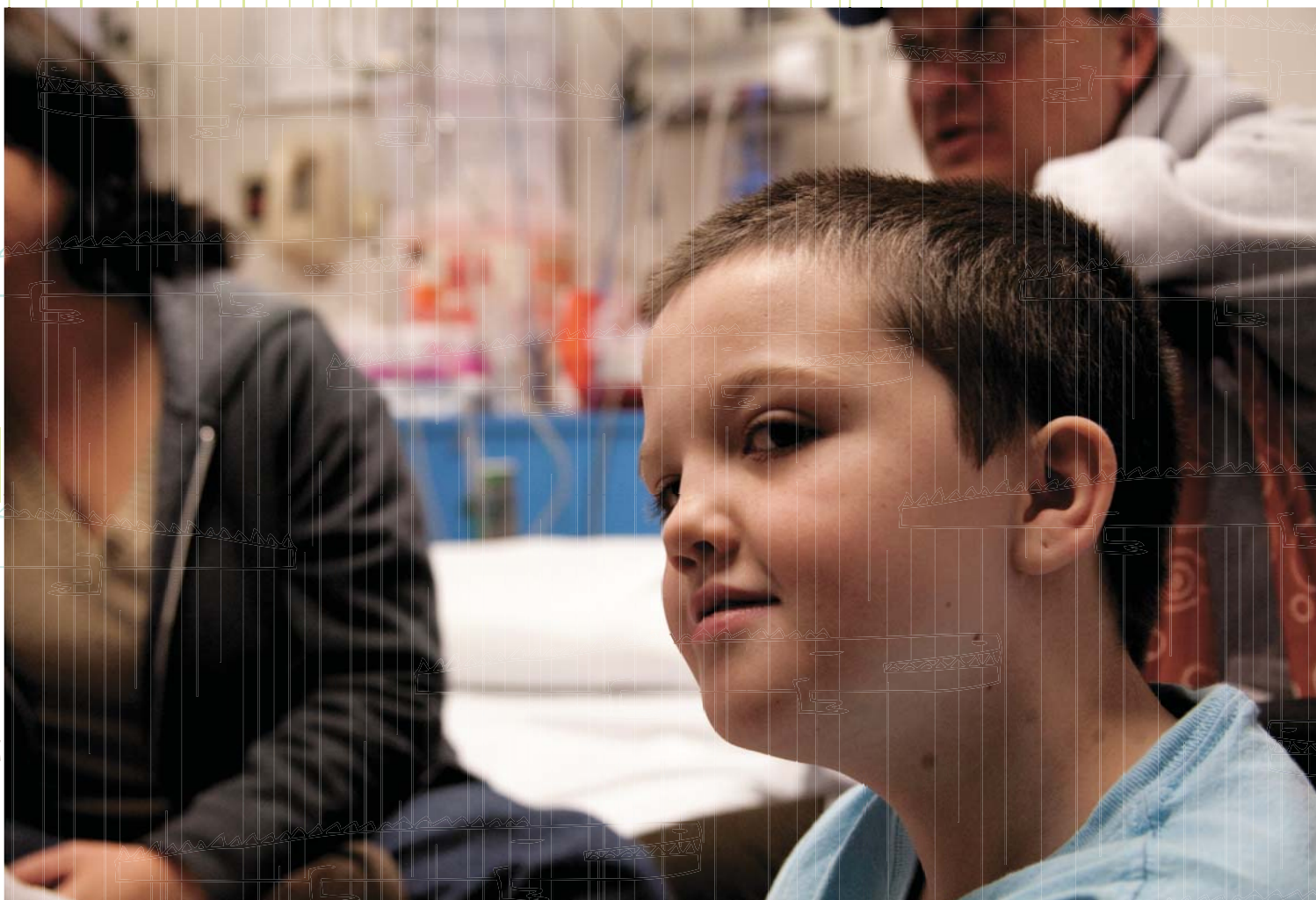
Krista Vandeborne, Ph.D., P.T., has been named the College of Public Health and Health Professions' associate dean for research and planning.

Vandeborne has served as a professor and chair of the college's department of physical therapy since 2002. During her tenure, the department has achieved a dramatic increase in research funding and received support for clinical fellowships and National Institutes of Health-funded predoctoral and junior faculty training programs. The department has also expanded research collaborations and developed a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree program and successful research forums.

"Dr. Vandeborne is an outstanding scholar, teacher and academic leader who has an extraordinary record of success in attracting external support for research and training," said Michael G. Perri, Ph.D., dean of the college.

Vandeborne studies muscle degeneration and regeneration and leads multisite studies funded by the NIH. Vandeborne investigates noninvasive techniques, such as MRI, to evaluate muscle tissue, and the use of gene transfer, exercise training and hormonal supplements to enhance muscle function. She also examines the physiological processes involved in repair of skeletal muscle and return of functional ability. Several of Vandeborne's studies have focused on Duchenne muscular dystrophy, the most common form of muscular dystrophy in children. The disease only occurs in boys and many do not live past their early 20s. The Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy organization recently recognized Vandeborne for her research contributions and advocacy for boys with Duchenne.

"Dr. Vandeborne's energy, enthusiasm, creativity and wealth of experience as a researcher, teacher, clinician and administrator make her the ideal person to spearhead PHHP's research activities and to contribute to the planning for the growth of our academic enterprise," Perri said. **P**

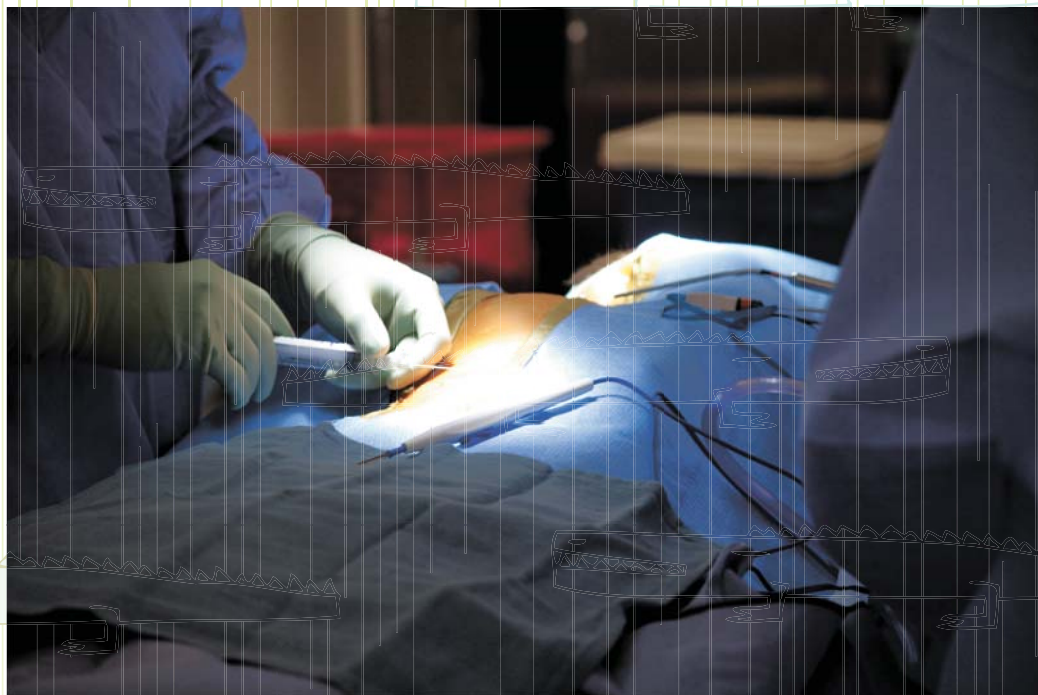
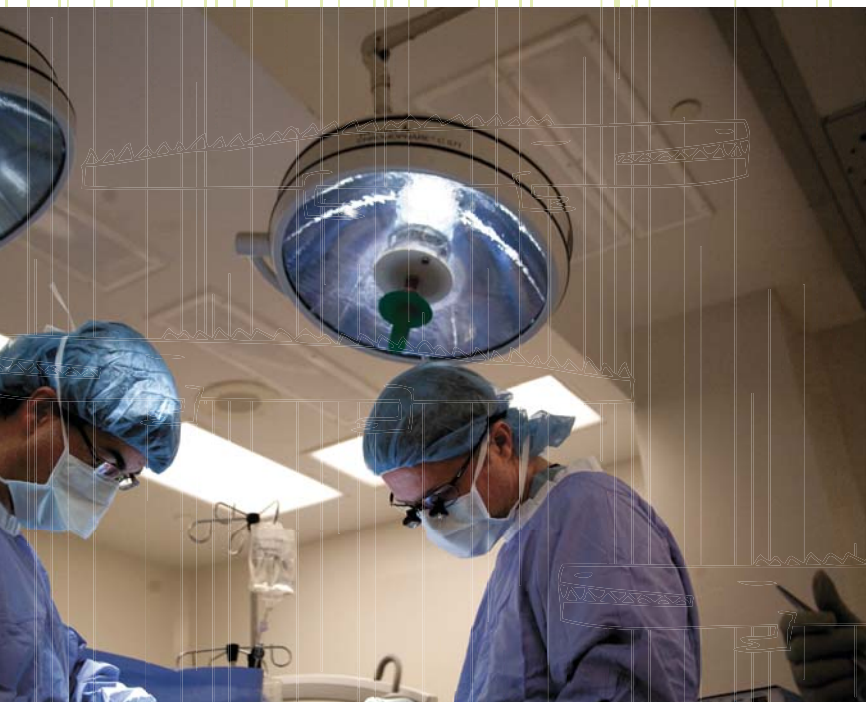


Samantha's hope

Photos by Kim Libby

Samantha Staab, 8, suffers from dystonia, a neurological movement disorder that results in abnormal twisting and posturing of her limbs. As her brother, Tyler, did before her, she underwent deep brain stimulation surgery in February to help with her symptoms but was sad to have to shave her head. Doctors from the UF Movement Disorders Center (including Kelly Foote, M.D., shown above talking to the family) put an implant in Samantha's brain to redirect an abnormal signal to her muscles they think is causing her condition. Although no one knows exactly why DBS surgery works, it has proved successful on a number of patients, including Tyler. Samantha and Tyler's parents, Michelle and Rick Staab, founded a nonprofit organization called Tyler's Hope to fund neurology research and create awareness of the disease. **P**





Honoring Irma

By Laura Mize

Irma Williams began working as a clinical care assistant in pediatrics so long ago, she can't remember the year she started. She worked at least 20 years before retiring from her job in UF's Pediatric Primary Care Clinic in late January.

"I've seen grandparents, the mothers, the fathers and the kids, now they're bringing their babies," Williams said of the patients she served.

Her decades of service made her something of an institution at the clinic and to many families in Gainesville. Williams, 62, said former patients or their parents often stop her when she's out running errands.

PHOTO BY SARAH CAREY



Dr. Laura Anderson (above) and Dr. Julie Levy nursed Holly the dog back to health after animal control officers found her starving and in need of a blood transfusion during the holidays.



PHOTO BY SARAH KIEWEL

Irma Williams (center) gets a hug during a retirement party her co-workers held for her in January.

"There was one of my families that I (took care of) the father when he was a little child," she said. "He came by and brought me a bottle of champagne (when I retired.)"

Linda Carlson, a registered nurse who works in the College of Medicine's department of pediatrics, said Williams had a special touch that earned her the respect of patients and doctors alike.

"Even when a child is meeting her for the first time and they're apprehensive and kind of resisting what needs to be done, she will be able to talk them into it and get them relaxed," Carlson said. "She knew if a child needed immediate attention. She had superior assessment skills."

Carlson said Williams was a model of empathy to pediatric residents.

Williams' co-workers celebrated her career with a retirement party in January.

She called the party "magnificent."

"Several of the faculty who did their residency here came to her party, just to honor her," Carlson said. "Others sent messages or cards. It was very neat."

When asked about her plans for retirement, Williams said she wants to "rest and spend time with my husband, Chester Williams."

The couple made plans to visit family in Georgia and a friend in Texas.

But Williams said she will miss the people who made her job so special: "My co-workers, the doctors who I worked with, and especially the parents. The parents and the children." **P**

Help for Holly

Dog rescued over holidays now thriving

By Sarah Carey

In late December, Julie Levy, D.V.M., director of the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at UF, received a desperate call for help from Alachua County Animal Services. A starving dog rescued by animal control officers was in critical condition, suffering from abuse and in dire need of a blood transfusion the shelter was unable to provide.

Although in many cases dogs in similar straits are not able to be saved, Levy and others at UF agreed to take the animal, which they named Holly in light of her holiday rescue. According to Levy and Laura Andersen, D.V.M., who has cared for Holly in her home, a miracle happened: In less than three months, Holly appears to be thriving and may soon have a permanent home.

"Holly is one of the lucky ones, since many dogs just like her die before they can be rescued," Levy said. "It's also not possible for the vet school to provide lifesaving care for all of the neglected dogs in our community. I think Holly appreciates the second chance she's been given by our team."

Carsten Bandt, D.V.M., a critical care specialist at UF's Veterinary Medical Center, supervised Holly's care after her arrival. She received an initial laboratory workup and two blood transfusions as well as fluid therapy and treatment for both internal and external parasites.

"Her rapid improvement allowed us to transfer her out of ICU and into the Shelter Medicine wards within 24 hours after admission, where she remained for continued rehabilitation to address her starvation until she was released from custody of Animal Services and could be placed in a foster home," Andersen said.

Holly received vaccinations, heartworm prevention and treatment for two Mycoplasma species discovered during tests, Andersen said, adding that she was also spayed and had a microchip implanted to aid with identification in case she should ever be lost.

"Following her initial stabilization, Holly's physical condition quickly improved with little more than deworming medication and food," Andersen said.

Following a story on WCJB-TV news, several calls were received from individuals interested in adopting Holly, and Andersen is optimistic that a good match for her has now been found.

Holly's medical expenses were covered by a grant from the Helping Alachua's Animals Requiring Treatment and Surgery program, which is overseen by Natalie Isaza, D.V.M., a clinical assistant professor with the shelter medicine program. **P**



Nurse Diana Chapman takes care of pediatric dialysis patient Thomas George, whose mother drives him to UF from Tallahassee for the treatment each week. Chapman has worked in the pediatric dialysis unit since it opened 35 years ago.

Diana's place

Pediatric dialysis unit celebrates 35th year in hospital

By April Frawley Birdwell

Thumbing through the red, leather-bound scrapbook she keeps at her desk, Diana Chapman, R.N., paused at almost every news clipping and photo. Each one sparks a memory.

"That's Dr. (Robert) Fennell. And this is one of our first little kids," she said, flipping past a black and white photo taken when the Shands at UF pediatric dialysis unit opened.

For Chapman, the scrapbook isn't just the tale of the pediatric dialysis unit, which celebrated its 35-year anniversary on March 24; it's the tale of a big part of her life, too. Chapman has worked in the unit since it opened in 1975, back when it was just one of two places in the state where children could receive dialysis.

Founded by former UF faculty members Fennell and George Richard, M.D., the Shands at UF pediatric dialysis unit has helped about 1,400 children over the years, Chapman says.

"Originally, we had kids coming in from many distances," she said.

Although dialysis looks much the same as it did in 1975, a lot has changed over the years to improve the treatment for children. Children (and adults) must undergo dialysis when their kidneys are failing and no longer able to properly filter waste from their blood. The process keeps their bodies' functioning while they wait for a kidney transplant.

"We used to have a lot of technical difficulties," Chapman said. "The machines did not have the software to tailor dialysis to kids. We did a lot of jerry-rigging. There have been so many improvements. Now, we are geared toward children very well."

With more medical centers offering dialysis to children around the state, the Shands at UF pediatric dialysis unit doesn't see quite as many patients as it used to, Chapman says. There were 10 nurses working in the unit at one point to keep up with the patients. Now, she is the only nurse who works with children full-time. But

do dialysis at home. Sometimes, she brings in a few of her Italian greyhounds to cheer up the kids, too.

"Diana has been the heart and soul of our Shands hospital dialysis services to children for the past 35 years," Dharnidharka said. "Being a charge nurse of a dialysis unit is not an easy job, especially where children are involved. Her unwavering devotion is an example to all of us."

But when she was in nursing school, Chapman knew one thing: She didn't want to work with kids. She changed her mind when she found out

"It really makes you feel good when you see kids that do well. You just want to make it the best you can for them while they are here." — *Diana Chapman*

the unit still serves an area that is much in need, says Vikas Dharnidharka, M.D., division chief of pediatric nephrology in the College of Medicine.

"Only the big cities in Florida offer this. Where we are located, in North Florida, we serve a large geographic area," Dharnidharka said. "Between here and Pensacola is the Bermuda triangle of pediatric dialysis care."

Tucked in an obscure corner on the fifth floor of the Shands at UF North Campus, the pediatric dialysis unit has five beds for patients and small rooms where Chapman teaches parents how to

about the job in the pediatric dialysis unit, but it still took her a little time to get the hang of working with the smaller set.

"My first day (in the dialysis unit), I was so intimidated by this 6-year-old. I couldn't take his blood pressure," she said, shaking her head.

Now, she can't imagine not working with children. She loves seeing her "kids," all grown up, healthy, with families of their own and jobs.

"It really makes you feel good when you see kids that do well," she said. "You just want to make it the best you can for them while they are here." **P**

Reducing risks

Researcher recommends changes to blood pressure scale

By Linda Homewood

For patients with diabetes and heart disease, less isn't always more — at least when it comes to blood pressure.

New data show an increased risk of heart attack, stroke or death for patients having blood pressure deemed too high — or too low — according to Rhonda Cooper-DeHoff, Pharm.D., an associate professor of pharmacy and medicine at UF. She reported her findings March 14 at the American College of Cardiology's 59th annual scientific session in Atlanta.

She recommends raising the systolic bar above 120 for blood pressure in patients with diabetes and coronary artery disease, saying that levels between 130 and 140 appear to be the most healthful.

Based on hypertension treatment guidelines, health-care practitioners have assumed that with regard to blood pressure, "the lower, the better," Cooper-DeHoff said. But, the International Verapamil SR-Trandolapril study, known as INVEST, suggests that the range considered normal for healthy Americans may actually be risky for those with a combined diagnosis of diabetes and coronary artery disease.

"Our data suggest that in patients with both diabetes and coronary artery disease, there is a blood pressure threshold below which cardiovascular risk increases," Cooper-DeHoff said.

As many as two out of three adults with diabetes have high blood pressure.



PHOTO BY SARAH KEMEL

RHONDA COOPER-DEHOFF, PHARM.D.

Normal blood pressure as defined by the American Heart Association is less than 120 systolic and less than 80 diastolic. Blood pressure greater than 140 is still associated with a nearly 50 percent increase in cardiovascular risk in patients with diabetes. But efforts to reduce systolic blood pressure to below 130 did not appear to offer any additional benefit to diabetics with coronary artery disease compared with reduction of systolic blood pressure to between 130 and less than 140.

Cooper-DeHoff's study reveals for the first time that this group of patients also had a similar increase in risk when their blood pressure was controlled to lower than 115 systolic — the range recommended as normal by the American Heart Association.

"Identifying thresholds of when to initiate treatment, and when to say 'good enough,' is extremely important not only to optimize patient outcomes, but also to help reduce unnecessary costs of care," said Stephan Brietzke, M.D., an associate professor of clinical medicine at the University of Missouri-Columbia who was not involved with the study. **P**



ROLAND HERZOG, PH.D.

By Czerne M. Reid

Hemophilia, a disease linked with legends of European monarchs, frail heirs and one flamboyant charlatan called Rasputin, still afflicts many people today.

And the very treatments that can help can also put patients' lives at risk.

The standard treatment is infusion with an expensively produced protein that helps the blood to clot. But in some patients the immune system fights the therapy, and in a subset of those, it sets off an allergic reaction that can result in death.

The power of plants

Plant-based system could improve hemophilia treatment

Now UF and University of Central Florida researchers have devised a way that could help patients develop tolerance to the therapeutic protein before they are in need of treatment.

They genetically modified plants to encapsulate the tolerance-inducing protein within cell walls so that when ingested, it can travel unscathed through the stomach and be released into the small intestines where the immune system can act on it. The low-cost plant-based system, now being tested in mice, eventually could help improve the lives of many people who have hemophilia and dramatically reduce related health-care costs. The approach also has the potential for use with other conditions such as food allergies and autoimmune diseases.

"We're hoping that our research will, in the future, result in better and more cost-effective therapies," said Roland Herzog, Ph.D., an associate professor of pediatrics, molecular genetics and microbiology in the UF College of Medicine and a member of the UF Genetics Institute, who was one of the study's leaders.

The findings were published March 29 in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. **P**

Tasty -AND- tumor-fighting

Papaya tea contains cancer-fighting properties

By Elizabeth Connor

The humble papaya is gaining credibility in Western medicine for anticancer powers that folk cultures have recognized for generations.

UF researcher Nam Dang, M.D., Ph.D., and colleagues in Japan have documented papaya's dramatic anticancer effect against a broad range of lab-grown tumors, including cancers of the cervix, breast, liver, lung and pancreas. The researchers used an extract made from dried papaya leaves, and the anticancer effects were stronger when cells received larger doses of the tea.

In a paper published in the Feb. 17 issue of the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, Dang and his colleagues also documented for the first time that papaya leaf extract boosts the production of key signaling molecules called Th1-type cytokines. This regulation of the immune system, in addition to papaya's direct antitumor effect on various cancers, suggests possible therapeutic strategies that use the immune system to fight cancers.

The papaya extract did not have any toxic effects on normal cells, avoiding a common and devastating consequence of many cancer therapy regimens. The success of the papaya extract in acting on cancer without toxicity is consistent with reports from indigenous populations in Australia and his native Vietnam, said Dang, a professor of medicine and medical director of the UF Shands Cancer Center Clinical Trials Office.

"Based on what I have seen and heard in a clinical setting, nobody who takes this extract experiences demonstrable toxicity; it seems like you could take it for a long time — as long as it is effective," he said.

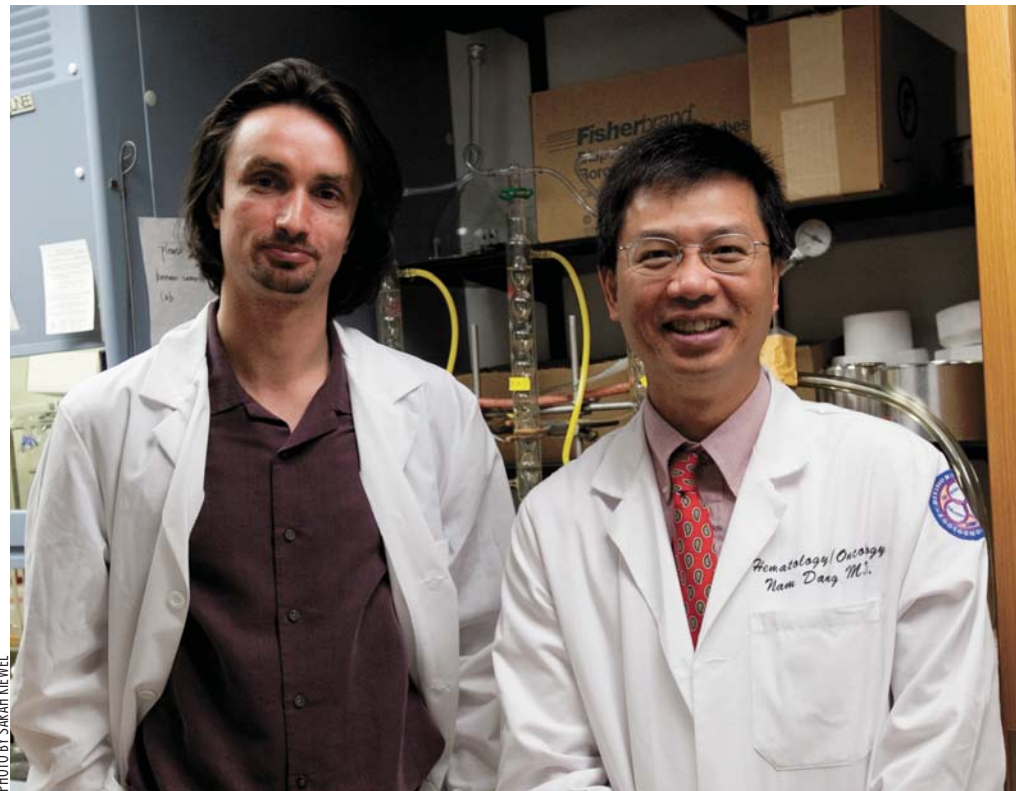
Researchers exposed 10 different types of cancer cell cultures to four strengths of papaya leaf extract and measured the effect after 24 hours. Papaya slowed the growth of tumors in all the cultures.

To identify the mechanism by which papaya checked the growth of the cultures, the team focused on a cell line for T lymphoma. Their results suggested that at least one of the mechanisms employed by the papaya extract is inducing cell death.

In a similar analysis, the team also looked at the effect of papaya extract on the production of antitumor molecules known as cytokines. Papaya was shown to promote the production of Th1-type cytokines, important in the regulation of the immune system. For that reason, the study findings raise the possibility of future use of papaya extract components in immune-related conditions such as inflammation, autoimmune disease and some cancers.

Bharat B. Aggarwal, Ph.D., a researcher at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, already is so convinced of papaya's restorative powers that he has a serving of the fruit every day.

"We have always known that papaya has a lot of interesting things in there," said Aggarwal, a professor in the center's department of experimental therapeutics who was not involved in the UF research.



Dr. Nam Dang (right) of the College of Medicine has teamed with College of Pharmacy researcher Hendrik Luesch to study the papaya leaf extract.

Foremost among papaya's health-promoting agents is papain, papaya's signature enzyme, which is found in both the fruit and the leaves.

"This paper has not gone too much into identifying the components responsible for the activity, which is just fine. I think that is a good beginning," Aggarwal said.

Aggarwal also noted that papaya extract's success in reducing cancer in laboratory cell cultures must next be replicated in animal and human studies.

"I hope Dr. Dang takes it further, because I think we need enthusiastic people like him to move it forward," Aggarwal said.

Dang and a colleague have applied to patent the process to distill the papaya extract through the University of Tokyo. The next step in the research is to identify the specific compounds in the papaya extract active against the cancer cell lines. For this stage, Dang has partnered with Hendrik Luesch, Ph.D., a fellow UF Shands Cancer Center member and a professor of medicinal chemistry in the College of Pharmacy. Luesch is an expert in the identification and synthesis of natural products for medicinal purposes, and recently discovered a coral reef compound that inhibits cancer cell growth in cell lines. **P**

HSC CONFIDENTIAL



MYSTERY! INTRIGUE! PIGS! IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE OF THE POST, WE BRING YOU ALL THREE IN A SERIES OF STORIES ABOUT THE HSC EXPERTS WHO HELP SOLVE MYSTERIES, FROM CRIMES TO DEADLY ILLNESSES.

BY APRIL FRAWLEY BIRDWELL

S

he couldn't figure out what killed the young man from Haiti.

His autopsy results had been negative. Same with the toxicology report. But prior to the Haitian immigrant's death, he'd gone to the hospital where tests revealed an elevated heart rate and abnormal EKG, remembers Martha Burt, M.D., a clinical assistant professor of pathology in the UF College of Medicine.

Burt, then a medical examiner in Miami, went over the case with one of her colleagues who thought it seemed like an overdose of cardiac glycoside. Cardiac glycosides are used to treat patients with certain heart problems, but toxicologists had not detected any in the man's blood.

"We went back out to where he lived and, as it turned out, right in front of his house was a huge oleander plant. Oleander is poisonous because it has (non-medicinal) cardiac glycosides in it," Burt says. "We tested his blood for that, and that's what it was.

"Being able to put all the pieces together, it doesn't happen when very often, but it is very cool when it does."

Now a medical examiner for the District 8 Medical Examiner's Office, Burt is one of many UF faculty and staff members who spend their days uncovering the secrets of death. UF is home to the District 8 Medical Examiner's Office, the William R. Maples Center for Forensic Medicine in the College of Medicine, the C.A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the world's largest online forensic science program in the College of Pharmacy. Also, UF is fast becoming the hub for the emerging field of veterinary forensics.

And most of these folks work together not only to teach students, but also to help solve crimes.



DR. B., MEDICAL EXAMINER

Solving crimes wasn't initially part of Burt's career plan. In medical school, she fell in love with the discipline of autopsy pathology. Unlike medical examiners, who aim to uncover the cause of death as part of an investigation, autopsy pathologists look more at the process of disease. Unfortunately, autopsy pathology is a dying trade, so Burt chose forensics.

As someone who spends her days dissecting the dead, she gets the question a lot: "How can you stand to do this?"

"I think our society as a whole is very sheltered from death," she says. "When it is a part of your daily life, it does become more comfortable, not personally, no one wants to think of their own death. But (the concept of death) is easier to deal with."

After working in Miami-Dade County, Burt came to UF in 2005 when the District 8 Medical Examiner's Office became part of the UF College of Medicine department of pathology. This relationship gives medical students, residents and students from other health disciplines close access to the inner working of a medical examiner's office.

Burt is one of two medical examiners in the office, led by William F. Hamilton, M.D. Together, they performs about 600 autopsies a year. Burt performs even more in her role as director of the autopsy service for Shands at UF.

Most take an hour or two to complete. But some autopsies are so complex they take days. And yes, things can get a little grisly. Car crashes tend to cause the most damage to the body.

"Separated, torn, crushed, munched, dismembered ... if you can think it, we have seen it," Burt says.

But the examination of the body isn't the only way the office investigates a person's death; they also investigate the scene and examine evidence. The District 8 Medical Examiner's Office employs three death investigators to help detect these on-scene clues.

"We incorporate everything," Burt says.

CSI: GAINESVILLE

Another partner the medical examiner's office works closely with at UF is the forensic toxicology laboratory led by Bruce Goldberger, Ph.D.

During his 25 years in forensic toxicology, Goldberger has testified in civil and criminal court a lot. One-hundred-and-seventy-three times to be exact. He's probably done almost as many news interviews.

A professor of pathology in the UF College of Medicine and director of UF's William R. Maples Center for Forensic Medicine, Goldberger and his team are involved in about 3,000 death investigations a year for seven medical examiner offices around the state. Each case is its own little mystery.

"Some people have equated the work we do in toxicology to assembling puzzle pieces. Some of our cases are very complicated and take a significant amount of work in the laboratory to complete," Goldberger says. "It is gratifying when we complete a case. Every one of them is important because it is a deceased person whose death is being investigated by the medical examiner's office."

A toxicology resource for the state attorney's office, Goldberger testifies almost every week around the state in deposition or trial, sharing his expert opinion on everything from

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PHOTO BY SARAH KIEWEL



BRUCE GOLDBERGER, PH.D

MYSTERY

BY JILL PEASE

PIGS



It was October 2009 with the swine flu pandemic in full swing, when the USDA announced the first case of the pandemic flu virus detected in U.S. pigs. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack rushed to reassure the public that pork products were safe to eat.

The researcher behind the discovery was Gregory Gray, M.D., M.P.H., chair of the College of Public Health and Health Professions' department of environmental and global health. His research team and collaborators at the University of Minnesota identified the pandemic H1N1 virus, the same strain that had sickened thousands of humans, in show pigs at the Minnesota State Fair.

The work began in the summer of 2008 when colleagues from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention asked Gray's research team to investigate influenza in people who participate in swine shows, common at county and state fairs. There was mounting evidence that people who participate in or came in close contact with pigs in these shows were at increased risk for contracting influenza.

Gray, then the director of the University of Iowa's Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases, led a team that studied pigs and their handlers at the Minnesota State Fair. The team went from stall to stall, interviewing participants, drawing blood samples from volunteers and taking swab samples from pigs' nostrils.

"The first year there was nothing. No evidence of swine flu in pigs or humans. We weren't too excited about going back the next year," Gray joked.

But 2009 was very different. Although all the show pigs seemed healthy, 19 percent of the 57 pigs tested at the Minnesota State Fair and one pig among 45 tested at the North Dakota State Fair had molecular evidence of influenza A virus in their noses. Six of seven viruses the researchers isolated from these pigs were identical to the pandemic H1N1 virus. Initially, the investigators thought the pigs might have acquired the infection from humans attending the fair, but the virus was present in some pigs at the start of two shows, suggesting that the pigs were already infected when they arrived.

Influenza viruses can move from domestic to wild animals to humans and back again, and in the process mutate and swap genes to generate new strains. The pandemic H1N1 virus, which may have originated in a La Gloria, Mexico hog herd, is a combination of genetic material from swine, avian and human influenzas.

"The fear is that as with other pandemic viruses, the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus of 2009 could become established in pigs, mix with other influenza viruses which are common in pigs, and cause another pandemic," Gray said. "We need to work closely with our colleagues in the College of Veterinary Medicine to study various animal populations and the workers in these facilities so that if new viruses emerge we can detect them quickly and develop vaccines."

In a series of studies, UF researchers from PHHP, the Emerging Pathogens Institute and the College of Veterinary Medicine, along with international collaborators in Eastern Europe, Central America, South America and the Caribbean, are hoping to do just that.

WHILE STILL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, DR. GREGORY GRAY AND HIS RESEARCH TEAM IDENTIFIED THE H1N1 VIRUS IN SHOW PIGS AT THE MINNESOTA STATE FAIR.





**MELINDA
MERCK, D.V.M.**

medical malpractice to drug-related homicides. He also has worked with the U.S. Attorney's Office on the prosecution of physicians charged with prescribing large quantities of controlled substances to their patients outside of the usual standard of care. Some of these patients died from drug overdose.

When Goldberger entered forensic toxicology, the field wasn't as in demand as it is now in the post-"CSI" world.

Because of the increase in popularity of forensic science, UF's Ian Tebbett, Ph.D., Pharm.D., established an online forensic science certification program 10 years ago. The program, which caters to law enforcement, now has 600 students in 30 countries.

"It's growing at a rate of 40 percent a year," says Tebbett, who discovered his passion for the field while working in Scotland Yard. "It's the largest forensic science program in the world."

Goldberger takes every opportunity he can to teach. He takes his students to depositions and trials to help prepare them for a career in forensic science. And he views his time on the stand as a teachable moment, too.

"That is why the jurisprudence system uses experts," he says. "They use them as teachers, as opiners. Before I can express my opinion to the jury, I have to give them the basic information."

THE REAL PET DETECTIVE

After Georgia passed a law making animal cruelty a felony offense in 2000, veterinarian Melinda Merck, D.V.M., found herself delving into forensic medicine. Because investigators were used to dealing with humans not dogs or cats, she began training them how to approach crimes against animals.

But the more she delved into it, the more she realized how little information existed about collecting animal evidence. So, she became the expert.

"I was motivated because there was nothing out there, no research," says Merck, an adjunct professor for the UF College of Veterinary Medicine and senior director of forensic sciences for the ASPCA. "There was a void. I felt it was unacceptable that we didn't have this information on animals."

Since then, she's investigated and testified on countless cases of animal cruelty, from neglect to dogfighting. She worked on the federal case against Michael Vick, who was convicting of running a dogfighting ring in 2007, and most recently testified in the trial of a woman accused of piercing kittens and marketing them as "gothic kittens."

"These crimes are tied to perpetrators that could be a current or future risk to society," Merck says. "The first (animal cruelty) felony in Atlanta that was prosecuted was a man who burned a dog. A few years later he was indicted for murder."

Now, Merck is bringing her expertise to UF students. She came to UF in August as part of a partnership between the ASPCA and the William R. Maples Center for Forensic Medicine to establish a program in veterinary forensic medicine. This month, the College of Veterinary Medicine began offering its first veterinary forensics class to junior students. A 15-credit online veterinary forensics certification program will start in January 2011.

Since coming to UF, Merck has teamed with other UF forensics experts to get the program going ... and to work on new cases. She and her team recently returned from excavating skeletons for a dogfighting case, and she teamed with the UF Shelter Medicine program to respond to a Florida sanctuary where 600 cats were neglected.

"The greatest thing is to see human forensics experts like Dr. (Jason) Byrd, Dr. (Bruce) Goldberger and Dr. (Michael) Warren embrace this," she said. "Without that, we wouldn't be where we are. That is going to bring us light years ahead." **P**



[The art] of survival

UF helps patients thrive in new role as cancer survivors

By Elizabeth Connor

Patricia Shearer, M.D., M.S., is an expert in helping cancer survivors adjust to life after cancer diagnosis and treatment. The pediatric oncologist directs the Cancer Survivor Program at the UF Shands Cancer Center, assisting survivors of all ages in anticipating the physical and emotional challenges that may arise after cancer treatment. For more information about the program, call 352-273-8021 or visit the program's website at www.shands.org/cancersurvivor.

Why is there a need for a program like this?

It is gratifying to see progress in curing both childhood and adult cancer. Now, the cure rate for children diagnosed with cancer is 80 percent and for adults it is 64 percent. However, the end of treatment for a survivor of any age can usher in a new set of challenges called "late effects." These include medical problems like growth delay; heart, lung, or kidney damage; low thyroid; infertility; hearing loss and even second cancers. Late effects also encompass pain, fatigue, anxiety, depression, lymphedema, mobility limitations and trouble obtaining insurance. We help survivors anticipate these problems based on their own individual chemotherapy, radiation and surgery so that they can be prevented or managed in the most effective way. Our goal is to enable all cancer survivors to live healthy, productive lives.

Can you describe a common late effect of cancer that might have been overlooked or just tolerated before?

We know that the fatigue of cancer survivors, particularly adults, is different from other types of fatigue. It may have more of a biochemical basis. We also know that certain young adult survivors have memory or learning problems that may not have occurred or been recognized during active treatment. We work with educators and psychologists to help survivors achieve their academic potential.

Who is eligible for the Cancer Survivor Program?

Cancer survivors of any age who are off therapy and free of cancer for at least two years can come to the Cancer Survivor Program. Women who are still taking hormones after treatment for breast cancer are eligible.

Does insurance cover the services of the Cancer Survivor Program?

In most cases, yes. Our staff can work with cancer survivors to help complete the paperwork.

What makes the UF cancer survivor program unique?

First, it is unique because we see cancer survivors of all ages. Second, we have a team of oncologists, a nurse and a social worker to work out a personalized treatment summary that deals with medical late effects and other late effects like obtaining insurance for each survivor. Third, we offer participation in research studies on survivorship. Lastly, we are the hub of a network for young adult cancer survivors in Florida to help them get access to survivorship care that may not be available elsewhere. **P**

Environmental Investigators

Center is key resource for state, national agencies

STEVE ROBERTS, PH.D.

PHOTO BY SARAH CAREY

By Sarah Carey

When the presence of pressure-treated lumber in playgrounds drew widespread controversy in 2001, UF's Center for Environmental and Human Toxicology was front and center, investigating and evaluating risk assessments at the request of both state and national regulatory agencies.

The lumber in question had been treated with CCA, a pesticide that contains arsenic, which can cause neurological problems, cardiovascular disease and even cancer. The state asked the UF center to study risk assessments that had been conducted on exposure to arsenic from pressure-treated wood, particularly exposure of children using wooden play structures.

The center found that a critical weakness in the assessments was the absence of data regarding how much arsenic children actually receive from contact with CCA-treated wood. Estimates of exposure risk varied widely, making it difficult to discern the extent to which the wood posed a health problem.

Then the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency decided to conduct its own assessment of risks to children from pressure-treated wood, relying heavily on technical advice provided by the UF center.

"We really were at the center of raising issues and questions regarding pressure-treated lumber, which ultimately resulted in the voluntary withdrawal of

chromate copper arsenate from residential usages," said Steve Roberts, Ph.D., a professor of physiological sciences at UF's College of Veterinary Medicine and center director.

Roberts can live without the publicity generated by that issue, but he stresses that such visibility is rare for the center because usually its work is behind the scenes. Many people may not know the center even exists at UF, although it plays a central role in evaluating risks from contaminated sites throughout the state.

"We evaluate from 30 to 40 sites a year, all within Florida," Roberts said. "We create criteria to help evaluate human health and the environment, developing and improving the process of risk assessment and helping to communicate information about risk to a variety of audiences."

His main message: The center's job is not to serve as advocate or activist but rather as a resource of pooled expertise that regulators can draw from to make sound policy decisions, whether having to do with safe levels of chemical concentrations in soil, benzene in drinking water or, yes, arsenic, which continues to be present in certain materials.

"We want people to know that we are a resource to public agencies, to help them ensure that the technical and scientific approaches to evaluating risk are undertaken using the best available science," Roberts said. "It's important that we don't make the decision about what is or isn't acceptable risk. Those decisions are made by regulatory agencies, but we get those agencies the science to make their decisions."

An example of the center's work is the Koppers Inc. wood treatment facility located in Gainesville. Environmental concerns about the Koppers facility, which is in the process of being closed and sold, have made local headlines for years, but UF's role in the due diligence performed to regulate

contaminants is not widely known.

"If you're going to evaluate the risk from that site, you have to understand where the contamination is, how much there is, who is being exposed, how they're being exposed, who might be exposed in the future and what the level of toxicity or potential toxicity is of any chemicals that might be present there," Roberts said.

All of this information is assembled to assist regulatory agencies and the public in deciding whether there is a risk to public health, he added.

"For example, if you read in the paper that dioxin levels in neighborhoods are above state standards, who develops the numbers for those standards? We do," Roberts said. "If you're going to evaluate a site for soil contamination, you have to follow certain rules, specifically the Florida Administrative Code. When the state writes those rules, we consult with its representatives to make sure site assessments are done properly."

Doug Jones, chief of the Bureau of Waste Cleanup with Florida's Department of Environmental Protection, said the center has provided invaluable service to the department for more than a decade.

"The center provides us a wide range of services — everything from the specialized scientific support we need to develop contamination cleanup policy to review of individual risk assessments for contaminated sites," he said.

Roberts and his colleague, Leah Stuchal, Ph.D., speak by phone several times a day with representatives from the state's Department of Environmental Protection and from Dade County, which has its own environmental criteria developed by the center. He doesn't remember a time when the center's recommendations have not been followed.

"That is the extent to which we are relied upon," he said. "It's not like we sort of talk to the agencies' toxicologists; we are their toxicologists." **P**

On call



College of Pharmacy forms call center to help patients manage prescriptions

By Monica Vigo

Doctors stopped making routine house calls 50 years ago, but UF pharmacists may be starting them back up. Imagine sitting in your den, chatting with your pharmacist over a cup of coffee or tea. For one uninterrupted hour, it's just you, your prescription medications and your pharmacist — answering your questions.

In a partnership with national health-plan company WellCare Health Plans Inc., the UF College of Pharmacy is receiving \$2.5 million to establish a medication therapy management call center. The call center satisfies a government requirement for health-plan providers of the Medicare prescription drug benefit to provide once-a-year comprehensive medication review with quarterly followups, called medication therapy management.

The importance of the MTM center is not only to see if patients are following their medication plans, but also to identify any non-prescribed drugs the patient could be taking that may react dangerously with other medications or cause them to be ineffective, said David Angaran, M.S., a clinical professor at the college and director of the center.

The faculty and student pharmacists use listening skills and empathetic conversation to help create a bond of trust, Angaran said.

"One of our biggest challenges is we have no prior relationship with the plan member. It's really perfect strangers talking to perfect strangers," Angaran said. "But the great thing about this is we're giving these patients our time and attention."

A pharmacist would have a difficult time trying to have a 30-minute uninterrupted conversation with even one patient during the workday, Angaran said. Using new MTM patient management software developed by Gold Standard/Elsevier, the call center can better reach thousands of patients to uncover and document details that the patients' health-care providers may not know.

"When you go to a pharmacy you get this sense that everyone's rushing. You're standing, and you have no privacy," Angaran said. "Our belief is that the patients open up more because they are in the comfort of their homes."

Of WellCare's 800,000 members, the UF call center will contact identified patients who have three or more chronic diseases and take eight or more medications that exceed \$3,000 in total costs annually. WellCare provides the center a record of all the prescribed medications each patient takes, how they should be using them and their disease states, Angaran said.

Qualified patients are sent a letter informing them that they are automatically included for the service but may opt out. The center calls all other patients to confirm participation and schedule a time when the patient can have their medications in front



Director David Angaran (front), trainer Michele Lawson (left) and clinical assistant professors Teresa Roane (center) and Heather Hardin (right) supervise student pharmacists and gather research data in the call center.

of them and speak with the center for up to an hour.

Before placing a second call the team reviews patients' pharmacy record to see what prescriptions they are taking, potential drug interactions, compliance and cost issues.

After spending 30 to 60 minutes of time with each patient and developing a medication action plan, the call center team sends a copy of the plan to the patients and a list of potential drug-related issues with possible solutions and references to their physicians.

The center, temporarily located in the UF Health Professions/Nursing/Pharmacy Complex, consists of four UF faculty members, two pharmacy staff, four residents, one fellow and 12 fourth-year student pharmacists working in eight-week internships. The center will move to UF's new Eastside building in July when construction is expected to be complete.

Besides patient care, the call center brings academic and research opportunities to the college, too. Faculty members Teresa Roane, Pharm.D., and Heather Hardin, Pharm.D., as well as incoming faculty member Anna Hall, Pharm.D., will supervise the student pharmacists and will gather data to publish research findings about the effectiveness of the center's patient outreach efforts.

"The students work really well with the technology," Hardin said. "Because the center is so new, this is a learning process for all of us and they are instrumental in the development of the MTM protocols."

Michele Lawson, an MTM trainer, teaches the students how to be empathetic pharmacy-care consultants and encourages the call center student interns to put their patient skills to work with this advice:

"You can hear a smile through the phone, so always smile," she said. "When you're on the phone you should feel like you're holding their hand." 



Fern Webb (shown here with sons Kustarr and Kowen) developed the Winning Over Weight wellness program, which is being presented in Jacksonville churches.

Improving *body and soul*

Researcher, churches partner in Holistic Health Program

By Laura Mize

Several nights a week, two Jacksonville churches are opening their doors for a program that helps people get their bodies and their souls in shape.

Peace Missionary Baptist Church and West Jacksonville Church of God in Christ both play host to the Winning Over Weight Wellness program, developed by Fern Jureidini Webb, Ph.D., project director and an assistant professor in UF's College of Medicine-Jacksonville, in close collaboration with expert interventionists in Jacksonville and South Florida.

The program, aimed specifically at African-American women, offers participants nutrition information and includes at least 45 minutes of exercise, plus scripture reading or meditation. As if that wasn't enough, the program also provides something for the women's children: a healthy dinner and Kids' Play Club, where the youngsters can get plenty of physical activity of their own.

The whole program is geared toward making it easier for women to establish healthy habits.

"I've always been passionate about getting healthier and the challenges of becoming healthier when you have so many different responsibilities," Webb said. "How can we marry some of the desires that we have, in terms of going to church, going to work, being good parents, and then getting physically active and learning more about eating healthier?"

Each church will host three 12-week sessions twice a week, each serving a different group of women. The first group began in January, and Webb said feedback so far has been "significantly positive." She anticipates the program will serve between 90 and 120 women before it ends in November.

"Given the initial success of this project, we are submitting an application to the National Institutes of Health to further develop the Winning Over Weight Wellness program, as well as fully measure its effectiveness," Webb said.

Gifts from The Aetna Foundation and The Wachovia Wells Fargo Foundation provide some of the program's funding, and instructors from Jacksonville Centre of the Arts lead the physical fitness segments. The College of Medicine is donating the time of Dr. Webb and other people working on the project.

Webb said she chose to target African-American women "because statistics and data support that African-American women are significantly more likely to be obese, overweight.

"African-American women also are ready to change."

The "spirituality" of this target group led Webb to seek the cooperation of some local churches for the program. Webb herself is a member of West Jacksonville Church of God in Christ.

"A lot of our time is spent in faith-based places, so we decided to partner with the churches," Webb explained. "Another part of it is that we wanted to get to individuals who may have some weight issues but not necessarily present in clinical settings, to engage individuals where they live and where they thrive."

Gary Hall Sr., Ph.D., senior pastor at West Jacksonville Church of God in Christ, said the

Holistic Health Program allows the church to meet some of the physical needs of those who participate.

"We believe that the spirit, soul and the body all should be cared for and properly maintained," he said. "The holistic program has allowed for us to come together with other like-minded persons, and we're able to just stretch it out, burn calories, be educated as to nutrition and some of the lifestyle

"We believe that the spirit, soul and the body all should be cared for and properly maintained."

— Gary Hall Sr., Ph.D.

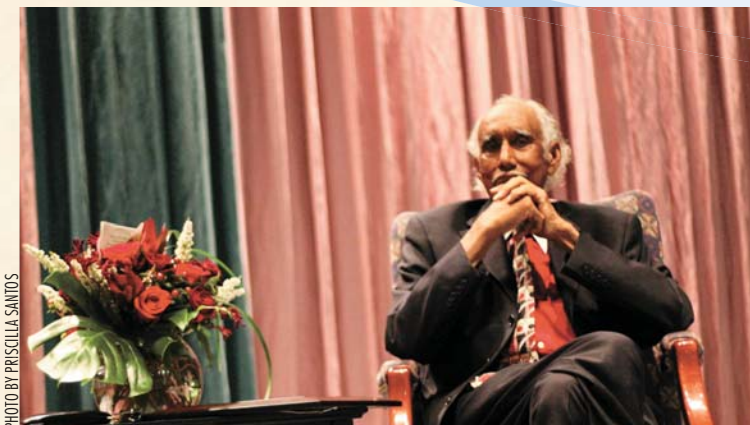
choices that may not be in our best long-term interest."

Webb and her fellow researchers will use questionnaires completed before and after each group to measure the program's effect on participants' size, weight, nutritional practices, physical activity habits and psychological well-being.

She said she anticipates positive results and hopes to expand the program to offer it to more people, not just African-American women.

"Once we start with this group, plans are to focus on everybody. We all need the physical activity and nutrition support." **P**

Saying goodbye



Goodbye to a pioneer

Willie Joel Sanders, a legendary teacher in the UF College of Medicine, died March 27. He was 81.

After a career that spanned more than three decades, Sanders retired from UF in 1989 as a tenured associate professor of anatomy and cell biology. He was the first African-American faculty member in the College of Medicine. Recently, more than 200 family members, friends, colleagues and former students shared their memories with Sanders at a celebration of his life at the Health Science Center.

"We were fortunate to have that moment to let him know how much he really meant to us," wrote Michael L. Good, M.D., dean of the College of Medicine, in an announcement to faculty.

Sanders was one of the first six black students to be accepted into UF as an undergraduate. He first began working for the Health Science Center in 1957 as an anatomy lab technician, 13 years before the first two African-American physicians graduated from the College of Medicine.

Because of his love for the study of anatomy, he advanced from the role of preparing materials used to instruct medical students to faculty ranks, becoming an associate professor of gross anatomy. He later became the director of the Office of Minority Affairs.

He lived his life committed to helping other people. He played a huge role in positively shaping many lives and careers. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Pauletta, and their five children, Paula Pringle, Willie Joel Sanders Jr., Tonnya Sanders, Rhonda Sanders and Chada Sanders.

"His College of Medicine family will miss him, but his spirit and legacy will never leave us," Good said. — *John Pastor* **P**



Remembering Dr. Pierson

K. Kendall Pierson, M.D., a longtime member of the department of pathology in the College of Medicine, passed away March 24.

He was 79.

Born in Idaho Falls, Idaho, Pierson was a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps from 1951 to 1953. He served in Hokaido, Japan during the Korean War. After graduating from the University of Utah with a bachelor's degree in theatre, TV and radio, Pierson earned his medical degree from New York University, where he went on to become an assistant professor.

Pierson joined the UF faculty in 1968, became a professor of pathology in 1970, and an emeritus professor in 1998. He also served as chief of staff at the Shands at UF medical center from 1976 to 1979.

Pierson is survived by his wife, Margery T. Pierson; two daughters, Cynthia Austin, of Lexington, Ky., and Pamela Portz, of Woodinville, Wash.; and six grandchildren: Jasher, Jadon, Zion and Gracyn Austin; and Elijah and Sammy Portz.

— *John Pastor* **P**



He devoted decades to UF

William Woodson Dawson, M.S., Ph.D., a devoted faculty member in the College of Medicine department of ophthalmology for 45 years whose innovative approach to eye disease research and ocular electrophysiology testing was highly regarded, passed away March 11, after an extended illness.

He was 76.

Dawson, a professor emeritus of ophthalmology, physiology and neuroscience, joined the College of Medicine faculty in 1965, recruited by then-ophthalmology chair Herbert Kaufman, M.D., to establish an electrophysiology testing service and conduct research into blinding eye disease. He administered the clinical electrophysiology testing unit in the Ophthalmology Eye Clinic for 35 years. In addition to his appointment in ophthalmology, Dawson also held joint or courtesy appointments in the departments of physiology, neuroscience, veterinary ophthalmology and psychology. He was an honorary faculty member at the University of Puerto Rico.

"Bill was a credit to the University of Florida, the College of Medicine and the department of ophthalmology," said William Driebe, M.D., chair of the department of ophthalmology. "His decades of basic science research into vision and eye disease led to creative approaches in defining their underlying causes. He will be missed by his many friends, students, fellows and colleagues."

Dawson received his bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University and his master's and doctorate in psychology and physiology from Florida State University and was a research fellow at the Donner Laboratory of Biophysics at the University of California at Berkeley. He joined the faculty at Auburn University for several years and was a John F. Kennedy Fellow at Peabody College in Nashville before joining the UF faculty.

Dawson devoted most of his 45 years at UF to basic research into vision and eye disease. He investigated most of the major blinding eye diseases using novel approaches to define their underlying causes. Most recently he spent much of his time developing the first naturally occurring primate animal models for several eye diseases, including glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration.

Dawson is survived by his beloved wife of 20 years, Judyth Corey Dawson, and his three daughters: Angela Vaziri, of Alameda, Calif.; Diana Bedell and her husband, Brian, of Gainesville; and Jude Dawson, of Gainesville; a stepdaughter, Sandra Frankenberger; and a stepson, Mark Frankenberger and his wife, Alison; and three grandchildren. — *Karen Dooley* **P**

Her life was "A Labor of Love"

Mary Elizabeth "Betty" Hilliard, Ph.D., C.N.M., a UF professor emeritus who founded the College of Nursing's nurse midwifery master's program in 1982 and was one of the early pioneers of nurse midwifery in Florida, died March 27 after an extended illness.

She was 85.

"Betty Hilliard was one of the most dedicated and passionate nursing leaders of her time," said Kathleen Ann Long, Ph.D., R.N., dean of the College of Nursing. "Although encountering resistance to nurse midwifery in much of her professional life, she persevered and dedicated herself to nurse midwifery education, and to improving the health of women and children."

When Hilliard came to Florida in 1960 to join the UF College of Nursing's faculty, she was one of only three nurse midwives in the state. Fifty years later there are more than 300 practicing nurse midwives in Florida, and the majority are alumni of the UF nurse-midwifery program.

"Dr. Hilliard fought to establish the program, and we are so appreciative of her drive and determination," said Alice Poe, D.S.N., C.N.M., coordinator of the nurse-midwifery program since 1990. "She was such a wonderful mentor to me and so many others — so kind and giving and willing to share her knowledge."

Hilliard received her nursing degree from Massachusetts General Hospital and completed postgraduate work in maternity nursing in Jersey City, N.J. She served in the U.S. Navy for five years and received her bachelor's of nursing degree from Catholic University of America, and her master's degree in nurse-midwifery from Yale University. She later received a doctorate from the UF College of Education.

Hilliard was one of the earliest faculty members of the UF College of Nursing, where she taught maternal and newborn nursing. Through her work at the Reddick Clinic, the Maternal-Infant Care Project and other ventures, she improved health care for a largely underserved population of women and infants and served as a role model for students.

In 2009, she saw a dream realized when her memoir, titled "A Labor of Love," was printed by the College of Nursing.

— *Tracy Brown Wright* **P**



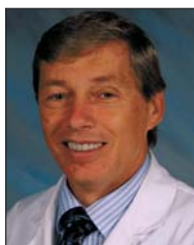


CHOMP!

UF swallowing disorders researchers won more awards recognizing outstanding posters, presentations and dissertation research than any other institution at the international Dysphagia Research Society's annual research meeting in March. **Michelle Troche**, Ph.D., a clinical lecturer in the College of Public Health and Health Professions department of communicative disorders, **Karen Wheeler-Hegland**, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in physiological sciences, and **Emily Plowman**, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in neuroscience, celebrate their awards with a Gator chomp. Not pictured is M.P.H. student **Chandylen Pendley** who received a Yul Brynner Head and Neck Cancer Foundation award for her presentation.

JACKSONVILLE

ERIC R. FRYKBERG, M.D., a professor in the department of surgery and chief of the division of general surgery, was recently selected as a candidate for membership in the prestigious Halsted Society of leading American surgeons. Frykberg joins two other UFCOM-J department of surgery professors, Michael S. Nussbaum, M.D., and Joseph J. Tepas III, M.D., in this elite national group limited to only 75 active members.



Eric R. Frykberg

for participation in this prestigious program, is a surgical oncologist whose clinical practice currently focuses on melanoma, sarcoma, breast and other solid tumors. He is an active researcher investigating the use of nanotechnology to improve cancer diagnosis and treatment.



Stephen Grobmyer

nonmotor symptoms of Parkinson's disease, particularly in domains of cognition and emotion processing. She was honored at an awards banquet during the association's annual meeting in March in Tampa.

COLLEGE OF DENTISTRY

THE COLLEGE OF DENTISTRY'S Clinical Education Model Transition Team members Boyd Robinson, D.D.S., Richelle Janiec, Ronald Watson, D.D.S., Charles Lesch, Justus Weber, Lamar Brooks and Stephen Kostewicz won a 2010 Prudential Davis Productivity Award from UF. The Prudential Davis Productivity Award annually honors Florida state employees, and recognizes teams and individuals who have adapted or implemented previous years' award-winning achievements to add additional value to the organization.

FRANK J. GENUARDI, M.D., M.P.H., an associate professor in the department of pediatrics and associate dean for student affairs, has been elected into the UF College of Medicine's Society of Teaching Scholars. Selection by the STS indicates excellence in teaching and commitment to enhancing the educational mission and the continuous quality improvement process of the educational program.



Frank J. Genuardi

CHRISTOPHER YOUNG,

M.D., a fellow specializing in neonatal-perinatal medicine, was one of five residents and fellows to receive the David C. Leach award from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education in March. The new award honors residents and fellows who have improved learning, fostered innovation, increased communication, made processes more efficient or advanced humanism in health care. Young, who also completed his pediatrics residency at UF, began a project at UF to help improve the neonatology fellowship.



Christopher Young

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS

JOHN LISSOWAY, M.D., a third-year resident in the Emergency Medicine Residency Program, has been selected to participate in a program to improve emergency care in Ghana using U.S.-trained emergency physicians. The Systems Improvement at District Hospitals and Regional Training of Emergency Care program is focused on clinical training, bedside teaching, clinical service delivery and process improvements at two district hospitals in Ghana over a three-year period. The program was launched last year in collaboration with the Ghana Health Service by Columbia University and the Mailman School of Public Health.



John Lissoway

MICHAEL MARSISKE, Ph.D.,

an associate professor in the department of clinical and health psychology, is the 2010 recipient of the Outstanding Research Mentor in Aging Award from the Institute of Learning in Retirement in partnership with the UF Age Network. The associate director for research at UF's Institute on Aging, Marsiske was recognized for his leadership of a National Institute on Aging-funded predoctoral research training program in aging and for individual mentorship of graduate and undergraduate students.



Michael Marsiske

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

STEPHEN GROBMYER, M.D., an assistant professor of surgery, will take part in the American Society of Clinical Oncology's leadership development program. Grobmyer, one of only 10 physicians nationwide selected

LAURA ZAHODNE, a

doctoral student in the department of clinical and health psychology, received a Young Investigator award from the American Neuropsychiatric Association. Her research focuses on



Laura Zahodne



Top volunteers

Richard Neiberger, M.D., Ph.D., an associate professor of pediatric nephrology and **Wayne McCormack**, Ph.D., associate dean for graduate education and director of the Interdisciplinary Program in Biomedical Sciences, each received the Silver Beaver Award from the North Florida Council of the Boy Scouts of America in March. The award is one of the group's top volunteer leader awards and is presented each year to a select few of the group's 6,000 adult volunteers. According to the Boy Scouts of America, the award is "given to those who implement the scouting program and perform community service through hard work, self-sacrifice, dedication and many years of service."

Relentless *forward* motion

Runner to speak about Parkinson's disease

By Kim Libby

When the average person sets out on a 62-mile run, he is bound to have a number of concerns, the most important being simply how to keep going. But, as he discovered in 2005, that was the least of Jon Anderson's problems.

He began his running career during high school in January 1962 and has never stopped. An accomplished ultramarathoner, finishing races well beyond the 26.2-mile marathon mark, he has challenged himself and his physical limits beyond what most people would consider. He has continually motivated others throughout his life as a former sixth-grade science teacher, West Point graduate and Vietnam veteran.

But during a routine break for water while training for a race in 2005, he noticed his right hand was shaking uncontrollably. He also had been tripping and falling, which was uncommon for someone with his level of agility. He described his symptoms to one of his friends, a nurse, and she told him to see a doctor right away.

"After that, I got on the Internet and read things over and it was eye-opening for me," he said. "So when I heard my diagnosis, I had come to expect it, and it was not that great of a surprise."

Anderson was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system that can impair motor skills and speech functions. Although medicines can help suppress some of the symptoms and help patients live their daily lives more easily, there is no cure for the disease.

The cause of the disorder is also unknown.

The unfortunate news hasn't stopped Anderson from living a normal life. He works at the Florida Museum of Natural History in the afternoons to pursue his interest in amphibians. And although his legs don't always "work as well as they used to," he still boxes, swims, hikes and lifts weights in addition to running. Doctors at the UF Movement and Disorders Center and the McKnight Brain



PHOTO BY JEFF GAGE


Jon Anderson, who works for the Florida Museum of Natural History, is an ultramarathon runner who happens to have Parkinson's disease. He will speak about the disease at an upcoming symposium.

Institute, where he receives treatment, have been supportive of his endeavors, as long as he continues to make adjustments to his regimen when it's appropriate, he said.

"There's a little mantra that we all live by in the world of ultramarathons: relentless forward motion," Anderson said. "When you run that far, you're hurting, you're tired, you're thirsty, but you just keep going, and the same rules apply to life."

The theory has become the subject of his talk at the eighth annual Parkinson's Disease Symposium, which will be held April 24 at the Abiding Savior Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall.

"It's my hope that I can stress to people just how important it is to stay active, especially for those with PD," he said. "Even though there isn't definitive research that it directly helps your symptoms, it's pretty much something everyone knows to be true and that everyone can benefit from."

Anderson said he hopes to get back to running ultramarathons in the near future. For more information about or to register for the symposium, e-mail Rachelle Stephens at rachelle.stephen@neurology.ufl.edu. 

PARKINSON'S DISEASE SYMPOSIUM

WHEN:

8:30 a.m to 2 p.m April 24

WHERE:

Abiding Savior Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall, 9700 West Newberry Road in Gainesville.

WHO:

Speakers include Michael Okun, M.D., Dennis Steindler, Ph.D., Irene Malaty, M.D., and Ramon Rodriguez, M.D.

INFO:

The event is free and open to all patients, caregivers, health providers and guests but reservations must be made in advance.

CONTACT:

rachelle.stephen@neurology.ufl.edu

SEE YA!



Public Health Student Association co-presidents Jennifer Drucker and Bryan Smallwood show fellow Master of Public Health student Chandy Pendley some of the items on display at the table they set up for Public Health Week in April.



Dr. Mark Scarborough, division chief of orthopaedic oncology for the UF College of Medicine, talks with second-year medical students at the recent Medical Speed Dating event.



Senior UF veterinary student Sarah Burke blows the feathers of this pileated woodpecker out of the way to examine the skin underneath for bruising. At right is Dr. James Wellehan, a lecturer with the zoological medicine service.

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