Sandra Mayrand honored with 2008 Carballo Award

Beginning with a single collaboration with one high school in 1989, Sandra Mayrand, MBA, has overseen the establishment and growth of the UMass Medical School Regional Science Resource Center (RSRC), a vital component of the UMass Office of Science Education. In 2007, the RSRC served 138 districts across the commonwealth, 2,135 teachers and 2,099 students directly through the lab in Shrewsbury and another 112,335 students indirectly through curriculum and teacher enhancement programs.

For her extraordinary contributions to science education in Massachusetts, Mayrand, who is director of the RSRC, was one of 10 state employees to receive this year’s Manuel Carballo Governor’s Award for Excellence in Public Service. Named for a former secretary of human services, the Carballo award is given annually to a select few who exemplify “the highest standards of public service through exceptional accomplishment, superior leadership, creativity and productivity.”

The success of the RSRC is a result of Mayrand’s passion for science and a hands-on approach to learning about it. Her crusade to show high school students how real science works has evolved from a small mentoring program into a range of educational assistance programs supported by national, state and local grants and foundations. Under her direction, the RSRC offers a state-of-the-art laboratory for student use; a K-12 standards-based math and science curriculum library with more than $100,000 of instructional materials for teachers to preview and borrow; Science to Go!, a refurbishment program for K-12 National Science Foundation curriculum units; teacher professional development programs in mathematics and science; and technical assistance to districts across the region. Additionally, the RSRC, in partnership with the Worcester EcoTarium, sponsors the annual House in Science conference to introduce middle school girls to careers in science and to connect them with local women who use science in their professions.

“THe award reflects the state’s validation of a strong K-12 education system and the important role that institutions like UMass Medical School have in partnering with school systems toward common goals,” said Mayrand.

Julia Johnson, MD, named chair of Obstetrics & Gynecology

Julia V. Johnson, MD, has been named the new chair of the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology. She will be joining UMass Medical School and UMass Memorial Medical Center in January. Dr. Johnson joins the institutions from the University of Vermont College of Medicine, where she has served as vice chair of gynecology and professor of obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive sciences since 2002; she has been a member of the faculty there since 1996.

A highly regarded clinician and clinical researcher, Johnson will add to the clinical and research expertise at UMass and UMass Memorial. Her research centers on alternate forms of hormonal contraceptive and menopausal hormone therapy, including current pharmacological trials examining transdermal hormone therapy and traditional Chinese herbal therapy. Additionally, she is involved in research on the affect of menopause on sexual function, as well as exploring the affect of progesterin and non-oral contraceptives on coagulation factors and thromboembolic risk.

A 1984 graduate of the Medical College of Georgia, Johnson also completed her residency in obstetrics and gynecology residency there. Following residency, she pursued a fellowship in reproductive endocrinology.

Shalesh Kaushal, MD, PhD, appointed chair of Ophthalmology

Shalesh Kaushal, MD, PhD, has been appointed chair of the newly reconstituted Department of Ophthalmology at UMass Medical School and UMass Memorial Medical Center. Dr. Kaushal was most recently at the University of Florida College of Medicine, where he served as assistant professor of ophthalmology and director of vitreoretinal services since 2002. He will join the UMass/UMass Memorial community in January.

Kaushal will enhance the clinical and translational research being done at UMass. Most recently, he has published research on the use of gene therapy to treat a type of congenital human blindness known as Leber Congenital Amaurosis. Additionally, he has been instrumental in the design of future retinal gene therapy trials that will be initiated at UMass, and will also be principal investigator for a complement inhibitor research study for wet age-related macular degeneration. Kaushal was the first investigator in the world to use these molecules to treat patients. His clinical...
Phase 2 trial shows promising results for \textit{C. difficile} treatment

The UMass Medical School Massachusetts Biologic Laboratories (MBL) and partner Medarex, Inc. announced in November that a Phase 2 trial of anti-\textit{C. difficile} antibody combination treatment in patients with \textit{C. difficile} associated diarrhea (CDAD) successfully met its primary objective.

\textit{C. difficile} is a bacterium common in the environment that can colonize the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. It can be spread easily among hospitalized patients and residents of long term care facilities, but also can be found in otherwise healthy individuals in the community. The disease is believed to develop in the presence of antibiotics used to treat other infections where the complex microbial make up of the GI tract is altered, and in which \textit{C. difficile} spores may germinate and produce toxins. The toxins damage the lining in the colon, resulting in severe diarrhea, and may lead to perforations of the colon and even death. Treatment of CDAD is difficult, and relapse and recurrence is common.

The incidence and mortality associated with CDAD has been increasing, with estimates of over 500,000 cases in the United States, and approximately 15,000 deaths caused or contributed to by \textit{C. difficile}. The emergence of a highly virulent epidemic strain that produces much higher levels of toxins has been seen in younger, healthier and non-hospitalized patients.

The recently completed Phase 2 trial showed a significant reduction in recurrences of CDAD when compared with placebo. In the study, 200 patients with CDAD receiving antibiotics were given either a placebo or a combination of CDA-1 and CDB-1, two fully human monoclonal antibodies that neutralize \textit{C. difficile}s toxins A and B, respectively.

The recurrence rate in the placebo treated group exceeded 20 percent for patients following standard treatment, which is consistent with other published findings. In comparison, the new combination treatment reduced recurrence rates by about 70 percent and was generally safe and well-tolerated. Full results from this Phase 2 trial are planned to be presented at a future scientific meeting.

"We are delighted with these dramatic results. CDAD is a growing and serious epidemic with 20 to 50 percent of hospitalized patients relapsing after receiving antibiotic treatment."

Donna Ambrosino, MD

Massachusetts Biologic Laboratories, in partnership with Medarex, has developed a promising monoclonal antibody for treating \textit{C. difficile}, as shown in a recently completed Phase 2 clinical trial.

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"We are delighted with these dramatic results. CDAD is a growing and serious epidemic, with 20 to 50 percent of hospitalized patients relapsing after receiving antibiotic treatment," said Donna Ambrosino, MD, executive director of the MBL and professor of pediatrics. "The demonstration of significant protection from relapse indicates that treatment with monoclonal antibodies against the toxins could reduce this significant and costly public health problem."
Serving underserved communities at home and abroad

Serving underserved communities at home and abroad

Michael D. Kneeland, MD, MPH, has been appointed to the newly created position for Allied Health and Inter-professional Education Programs.

In a community-based effort to address the unique health care needs of Worcester’s African-immigrant population. Along with MD PhD student Jen MacDonald, who has extensive experience working in Worcester’s free health care clinics, the two manage the initiative’s free clinic, which delivers culturally competent care to its patients.

Partnered with community volunteers, UMMS faculty, and the Graduate School of Nursing, Jaffe and Bartek are expanding the services offered beyond simple medical visits. “I was drawn to this project’s combination of learning how to run a clinic while working toward a common goal with community members,” recalled Jaffe.

“This model was appealing especially because it is truly a give and take where volunteers learn from patients just as much as patients learn from volunteers,” agreed Bartek.

Applying for Schweitzer support after his initial volunteer stint at the Center for Healthy Kids in Worcester’s Great Brook Valley housing complex, Peteet is continuing the work begun four years ago by two UMMS student predecessors who sought to educate kids about healthy choices. In addition to continuing classes on topics including nutrition, physical exercise and positive body image, as well as tutoring, Peteet is spearheading new projects to increase wellness in children and families in the area.

“Through the fellowship this year, I have enjoyed having the chance to work with kids more where they live and directly observe the challenges they have to staying healthy,” said Peteet, who is also a resident in internal medicine.

Since joining the team that oversees all financial operations for the University, Karen Ivey has become invaluable. “Through Karen’s monitoring of budgets for multiple projects, financial analyst Karen Ivey did all this while performing her regular duties, including assisting in the development of more than 20 different budget analyses. “She is not afraid to dive in and help wherever she can to ensure the department’s deadlines are met,” wrote Adrian.

Michael Kneeland, MD, MPH, appointed new associate dean

Michael Kneeland, MD, MPH, has been appointed to the newly created position of associate dean for Allied Health and Inter-professional Education Programs in the Office of Educational Affairs. In this role, Dr. Kneeland will provide leadership, coordination, resource support and project management for UMMS Medical School’s diverse interprofessional programs and activities, with a particular focus on development of allied health education.

The establishment of this position capitalizes on the unique attributes of UMMS and its Memorial Health Care as components of an academic health sciences center dedicated to advancing health sciences education across diverse health professions, as such, the position is aligned with the strategic vision, which values and promotes inter-professional models of education, training and practice.

Kneeland will also serve as associate medical director for Program Clinical Support in Commonwealth Medicine, where he will develop and implement a comprehensive systematic clinical quality improvement program for UMMS Correctional Health.

A board-certified physician in internal medicine and a fellow of the American College of Physicians, Kneeland is a magna cum laude graduate of the University of Massachusetts with a BS in medical technology; a graduate of Tufts University School of Medicine; and a graduate of the Harvard University School of Public Health with a master’s degree in public health, health care policy and management and health services administration.

Karen Ivey
Financial Analyst, Facilities Management
Year started: 2004
Homebase: Milfordville

Professionally Speaking
Since joining the team that oversees all financial operations for Facilities Management, including preparation, analysis and monitoring of budgets for multiple projects, financial analyst Karen Ivey has become invaluable. “Through Karen’s accomplishments the department has benefited from better reporting, efficient business procedures and consistency of business practices that have led to overall cost savings for the University,” wrote nominee David Adrian, administrative manager for Facilities.

Most recently, Ivey helped implement Facility Max, the department’s new maintenance management software system. She organized the testing and rollout of all the financial transactions from the work order system, including reconciling its interaction with the PeopleSoft General Ledger System to ensure no transactions were lost during the transition.

“This was no small task given that the work order system tracks more than 170 employees and nearly $50 million in transactions,” noted Adrian.

Ivey did all this while performing her regular duties, including assisting in the development of more than 20 different budget analyses. “She is not afraid to dive in and help whenever she can to ensure the department’s deadlines are met,” wrote Adrian.

Points of Pride
As the Medical School continues to expand its physical footprint and improve its facilities, Ivey is happy to continue contributing to Facilities Management’s central role in supporting the institution’s dramatic growth. “We support the entire spectrum of capital construction projects, from renovating a single laboratory to constructing a whole new building,” said Ivey, who looks forward to building her career by taking advantage of Workplace Learning opportunities to increase her knowledge and skills, particularly in management.

Schweitzer fellows enhance medical education, engage students in service

Schweitzer fellow John Stenglein and Chentah in Lambaréné, Gabon.

Last summer Stenglein became the School of Medicine’s second Lambaréné Fellow, one of four third-year medical students nationwide selected annually to spend three months working on clinical rotations at the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Lambaréné, Gabon. “It was the most emotionally difficult but rewarding experience of my life,” said Stenglein, who prepared for the Lambaréné fellowship by studying French in North Africa through the UMMS Pathway on Serving Multicultural and Underserved Populations so that he would have the fluency required of Lambaréné applicants.

“Throughout my medical career I hope to improve the lives of people who are disadvantaged.”

Upon completion of their projects, participants become Fellows for Life, joining a network of more than 1,700 Lambaréné and U.S. Schweitzer Fellows who are dedicated to maintaining service in their personal and professional lives. The Fellowship affirms a lifelong commitment to serve and keeps one in contact with a large group of doctors and scientists who identify with Schweitzer’s “reverence for life” philosophy and enjoy the intangible rewards of medicine,” said Stenglein.
Calendar

You are cordially invited to a Holiday Reception
Friday, December 12, 2008
3–5 p.m. and 10–11 p.m.
Faculty Conference Room

Hosted by
Michael F. Collins, MD
Chancellor
UMass Medical School
John G. O’Brien
President and CEO
UMass Memorial Health Care

Chancellor Michael F. Collins and UMass Memorial Health Care President and CEO John G. O’Brien will host the annual Holiday Reception on Friday, Dec. 12, from 3 to 5 p.m. and 10 to 11 p.m. for all University campus employees, students and volunteers. The reception will take place in the Faculty Conference Room and the new Medical School Lobby.

The newest installment of the Lamar Scotts Library Artist in Residence Series, Abstract Views, acrylics by Jean-Pierre Etchegaray, postdoctoral fellow in neurology, opens on Monday, Dec. 1 and runs through Friday, Jan. 9. A reception will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 10 from 5 to 7 p.m. on the first floor of the Library. For additional information, contact Nancy Harger at ext. 6334 or via global e-mail.

The Center for Mindfulness invites all UMass employees to participate in the nationally acclaimed Stress Reduction Program for a deeply discounted fee of $125. If you are interested in increasing your concentration and focus, learning to respond to stress more effectively, increasing your resiliency, and enhancing your sense of creativity, then call ext. 62056 to enroll in a required, free, pre-program orientation session. This is a wonderful way to take care of yourself. Clowes start the week of Jan. 19. Bring your UMass ID badge to orientation to receive your employee discount.

The Office of Medical Education, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, is sponsoring a free reading and discussion group, “Literature & Medicine: Humanities at the Heart of Health Care.” The group will read and discuss works of fiction, poetry and nonfiction that explore the intricate nature of relationships among caregivers, as well as with patients and their families. Humanities scholar Patrick Ireland, Ph.D., associate professor of English at the College of the Holy Cross, will lead the group discussions. All books (on loan) and other reading materials will be provided, as will a light supper. The monthly sessions will be held from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the Medical School on the following Wednesdays: Jan. 21, Feb. 11, March 11, April 15, May 13 and June 17. Space is limited; the applicant deadline is Tuesday, Dec. 22. For additional information or to apply, contact Sherri Jean-Bart at ext.3487 or via global e-mail. Or view the syllabus at library.umassmed.edu/concettion/med/linmed_syllabus.pdf.

The UMass Night at the Pops 2009 scheduled for Thursday, May 7, 2009 has been cancelled. For additional information, e-mail pops@umassp.edu or call 617-877-5772.

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