

focus

UMass Medical School and VAMC Bedford sign academic affiliation agreement

UMass Medical School (UMMS) and the Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC) Bedford have signed an academic affiliation agreement that will enhance medical education, advance research and improve patient care. Through the agreement, UMMS students, residents and faculty will partner with staff of the VAMC Bedford, a long-term health care facility specializing in geriatric and psychiatric care, to provide comprehensive health services to local veterans of the American military system, while providing teaching and learning opportunities for UMMS students and residents.

“Medical education, research and patient care are integral to the mission of both the VA and the Medical School,” said Jeannette Chirico-Post, MD, VA New England Network Director. The VAMC Bedford provides comprehensive health services through multiple sites in Bedford, Lowell, Winchendon, Lynn, Haverhill, Gloucester and Fitchburg. Internationally recognized for research into geriatric issues and behavioral disorders, VAMC Bedford facilitates an active Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center to enhance the care of aged veterans through a comprehensive and integrated program of basic and applied research.

The affiliation between UMMS at the VAMC Bedford is particularly important

for the return of soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan who have a need for the services provided by both organizations. “The UMass Medical School Department of Psychiatry is committed to improving the mental health and wellness of citizens of Massachusetts, and the veteran population is very important to include in our efforts to develop research and other academic collaborations on post-traumatic stress disorder, addictions, homelessness, geriatric depression and integrated treatment with primary care and psychiatry,” said Douglas Ziedonis, MD, MPH, chair of psychiatry. VAMC Bedford’s Mental Health Intensive Case Management Program serves veterans with serious mental health issues and provides a continuous



care program that utilizes resources to assist psychiatrically impaired veterans in making and maintaining the transition to community living.

The new affiliation with VAMC Bedford expands and builds on the long-standing affiliations UMMS already has with the VA clinics in Worcester and Boston. “By focusing on ways to improve the mental health and wellness of veterans, this new partnership will also serve as an important training site for students, residents and interns in the Department of Psychiatry and for faculty and staff,” Dr. Ziedonis concluded. ■

The new affiliation will expand health care for area veterans and create learning and research opportunities for UMMS medical students, residents and faculty. Pictured left to right at the press conference and signing ceremony are Interim Chancellor Michael F. Collins, Douglas Ziedonis, Congressman James McGovern, Congressman John Tierney, and Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education Deborah Demarco.

Gao to lead newly established Gene Therapy Center

UMass Medical School (UMMS) has named Guangping Gao, PhD, as the founding director of the UMMS Gene Therapy Center. Gao, an internationally recognized researcher of adeno-associated viruses (AAVs), joined UMMS on March 31 and comes to Worcester from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. Dr. Gao has also been appointed professor of molecular genetics & microbiology at UMMS.

“I am enthusiastic about the opportunities that lie ahead,” said Gao. “UMMS has a great vision to expand translational research and to develop innovative treatments, and I value the institution’s commitment to pursue advanced therapeutics in the form of stem cell research, RNA interference and gene therapy.”

As director of the new center, Gao will oversee the facilitation of basic and pre-clinical research leading to the gene therapy treatment of human disease and the development of effective gene vectors, which are agents that carry modified genetic material, such as recombinant DNA, and may be used to introduce outside genes into human cells. In addition,

he will be responsible for recruiting gene therapy investigators, and will serve as scientific director of the UMMS–China Translational Research Initiative, which will allow scientists at UMMS and Tsinghua University in Beijing to collaboratively take fundamental research results and translate them to the development of new drugs and medical devices.

After completing his post-doctoral fellowship in gene therapy at the Institute for Human Gene Therapy at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Gao joined the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania in 1994 and built his career in viral vector biology. He served as director of the Vector

Program of the Gene Therapy Program in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and managed vector discovery and development, process development, vector production and quality control testing. Gao has been the driving force behind the discovery and vectorology of a novel family of AAVs and the development of adenovirus vector-based vaccine programs.

“Dr. Gao is among the young investigators who are well recognized in the field of viral vector-based gene therapy and genetic vaccine research, and we are looking forward to his leadership in establishing the necessary collaborations between basic scientists in the UMMS Gene Therapy Center and clinician investigators,” said Terence R. Flotte, MD, dean of the School of Medicine, provost and executive deputy chancellor. ■



Guangping Gao, PhD

Get in Focus

Have a story idea, a faculty, student or staff achievement, or a campus-wide event for the calendar? Send it to the *Focus* editor at focus@umassmed.edu



American Red Cross recognizes UMMS ‘champions’

The American Red Cross (ARC) of Central Massachusetts recently recognized two members of the UMMS community for their contributions to society—Jonathan M. Spector, MD, MPH, assistant professor of pediatrics, and Carol A. Bova, PhD, associate professor of nursing and medicine.

Drs. Spector and Bova were honored last month during “A Breakfast of Champions,” that acknowledged nine local heroes for their community involvement and international service. The organization recognized Spector, a neonatology fellow, for his decade-long commitment to improving the well-being of children living in developing countries by working with organizations including Doctors Without Borders, Concern Worldwide and Project Hope. He treated children in therapeutic feeding centers during the height of the nutritional crises in Angola and Darfur, and cared for children suffering from a variety of tropical illnesses, including malaria and tuberculosis. Today, his research is focused on tropical infectious and nutritional pediatric illnesses as well as

global neonatal survival. He serves the residents of Central Massachusetts by practicing newborn care with a team of physicians and nurses in UMass Memorial Medical Center’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. “This is a great honor, and it shines a light on issues that not only affect our community, but communities throughout the world,” said Spector.

Bova was praised for her community work to increase educational health programs that have had a positive impact on the lives of patients, particularly HIV/AIDS-infected women. She was responsible for developing the Positive Life Skills Workshop, which helped women with HIV to explore venues for reframing the meaning of the disease in their lives. Like Spector, her dedication to improving the



While working in Sudan with Doctors Without Borders, Jonathan Spector, MD, MPH, assistant professor of pediatrics, provided care to young children in the Therapeutic Feeding Center in West Darfur.

quality of life for patients has also spanned the globe. She and Carol Jaffarian, MSN, an instructor in the Graduate School of Nursing, developed the HIV Education and

Prevention Project in Armenia, which now serves as a model to create HIV educational programs in other countries and reinforces efforts in the United States as well. ■

Last month, Massachusetts Senate President Therese Murray

and several legislative colleagues held a press conference at UMass Medical School to announce the next phase of Massachusetts Health Care Reform. In order to continue providing health coverage to the thousands of people covered in the initial phase of reform, Murray said that the cost of providing health care must be contained. Among the many recommendations, Murray and her colleagues called for increasing the size of each School of Medicine class by several students and offering financial incentives to medical students who choose primary care.



achievements

■ **JeanMarie Houghton**, MD, PhD, associate professor of medicine, has been named a Fellow of the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA), the nation’s oldest medical society dedicated to disorders of the gastrointestinal tract. Through the fellowship program, the AGA honors superior professional achievement in clinical private or academic practice and in basic or clinical research.

■ The following faculty members, all professors of medicine, were awarded *Emeritus* status by the Board of Trustees at the March meeting: **Jeffrey Bernhard**, MD; **Mary Costanza**, MD; and **Robert Zurier**, MD.



Following are faculty who have joined UMMS as professors or associate professors or who have been promoted to those positions, as documented by the Office of Faculty Administration:

Gary Ostroff, PhD, appointed research professor of molecular medicine

Shannon B. Jenkins, MD, promoted to clinical associate professor of family medicine & community health



BOT approves Tobacco Free policy

Last month, the University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees approved the Tobacco Free Environment/No Smoking Policy for University of Massachusetts Medical School campuses and facilities. The approved policy states that smoking and use of any tobacco products of any kind is prohibited in or on any UMMS property, whether owned, leased or assigned, inclusive of buildings, garages, grounds or other spaces.

“As a physician who has seen the devastating effects of tobacco, I am very proud that UMass Worcester and UMass Memorial Medical Center campuses have undertaken efforts to become tobacco free,” said Interim Chancellor Michael F. Collins in his report to the board. “The joint initiative will reduce the risks of exposure to smoke, including second-hand smoke, among those who work, study and receive care at our institutions.”

To support individuals who smoke in complying with the Tobacco Free policy, UMMS and UMass Memorial have made a significant investment in an extensive array of support services, including providing medication at no cost to staff, faculty, students and volunteers who view the new policy as an

opportunity to change their tobacco-use habits. Individuals who don’t choose to quit completely are encouraged to take advantage of nicotine replacement therapy options to reduce nicotine cravings while on campus. Employees who do not comply with the Tobacco Free policy are subject to progressive discipline in accordance with UMMS and UMass Memorial policies and practices.

“More than 150 people have visited Employee Health Services and the Prescription Center to inquire about obtaining nicotine replacement therapy and non-nicotine pharmacotherapy since we introduced the support program on March 1, representing roughly 7 percent of the estimated 2,200 UMMS and UMass Memorial employees who smoke,” noted Gregory Seward, MSHCA, director of the Tobacco Free Initiative. “We expect and hope that many more will take advantage of these benefits, which are available through September.”

To learn more about tobacco cessation support, call x6-1555 or visit inside.umassmed.edu/tobaccofree, where the full UMMS policy can also be viewed. ■

Grant to UMMS will raise awareness of careers in science

Without proper awareness, too many students currently in middle school will miss out on the career opportunities of tomorrow, particularly in science, technology, engineering and math. Research shows that while many middle school-aged kids may not be ready to decide on a career, many form strong opinions about what they *don't* want to do, with girls especially prone to shying away from science and minority and low-income students facing additional obstacles to science and math careers, including a shortage of visible role models.

To help overcome these barriers, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education has awarded the Central MA STEM Pipeline Network, led by the UMMS Regional Science Resource Center (RSRC), a \$500,000 grant to launch STEM Central, a strategic communication initiative that will increase awareness of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers and the educational pathways required for entry into the 21st century math and science work force. Building and expanding upon RSRC's wide range of activities over the past 15 years to improve K-12 math and science education, STEM Central will target middle school students and the adults who influence them, including parents, teachers and guidance counselors.

"We're delighted to be receiving major funding to apply what we've learned about attracting this age group to careers in science," said RSRC Director Sandra Mayrand, MBA. The Central Massachusetts

STEM Pipeline Network, a collaboration among institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, industry/business and public schools, promotes math and science education of K-12 students and their teachers.

STEM Central will expand existing STEM Pipeline Network efforts beyond the Worcester Public Schools to reach 675 middle school students per year from 22 schools in Leominster, Fitchburg, Shrewsbury, Westborough and the Blackstone Valley region. Grant-funded efforts will include replicating the RSRC and EcoTarium's popular *Women in Science* annual conferences for middle school boys; establishing a career mentor group of professionals, faculty and students employed in STEM disciplines; and creating and disseminating student- and parent-friendly career information in a variety of formats, including a STEM Central Web site.

Participating schools will be assigned mentors to assist students in



The Central MA STEM Pipeline Network, led by the UMMS Regional Resource Science Center (RSRC), received a \$500,000 grant to launch a strategic communication initiative aimed at increasing awareness of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers in middle school students. Above, Sophie Pearson, Johanna Smith and Emily Humphries, seventh graders from Gibbons Middle School in Westborough, extract DNA from an onion in the RSRC labs.

developing a creative project that will promote scientific careers to their peers. Projects may include anything from a Web-based video to a logo that can be printed on T-shirts. The Central MA STEM Pipeline Network will evaluate each school's communication project and determine which best tell the story and could be transformed into professional presentations. "Having students create the communications vehicles makes this a kid-driven initiative," said Mayrand.

This approach, and RSRC's history of leadership in developing networks and partnerships, was singled out by the Board of Higher Education's STEM Pipeline Fund as being important in its decision to award the funds. "Kids need concrete experiences to make abstract concepts like future career goals real to them," explained Mayrand. "STEM Central activities will engage students by making great 21st century jobs visible to them and their parents." ■

Library offers support for NIH public access mandate

A law passed late last year requires the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to ensure that the results of NIH-funded research be made accessible to the public as a means of advancing science and improving public health. Effective April 7, 2008, all peer-reviewed, published journal articles that derive from NIH-funded research must be deposited into PubMed Central, the National Library of

Medicine's online archive of biomedical journal articles that is publicly available without a fee. In order to comply with the new requirement, principal investigators must retain rights to submit articles to PubMed Central before signing publication and copyright transfer agreements with the publishing journal. Scientists must also provide proof to the NIH when reporting on grant progress

that published results have been deposited in PubMed Central.

This new requirement is being supported at UMass Medical School by the Lamar Soutter Library. A team of librarians studied the public access mandate and then created an online resource aimed at eliminating any concerns principal investigators may have about complying with this new requirement. The resource includes

information about the policy, help with copyright questions, important dates and assistance (or training) for using the PubMed Central online submission system.

For additional details about complying with the NIH Public Access Mandate, contact Sally Gore at 6-1966 or via global e-mail, or visit library.umassmed.edu/nih_mandate.cfm ■

employees infocus

April Employee of Distinction Award

Vitals

Joe Perron

Lead Console Operator, Facilities Maintenance

Year started: 1986

Hometown: Rutland

Professionally Speaking

Joe Perron has been responding to calls for assistance from UMass Medical School employees, students and visitors for 20 years. Since stepping into the role of lead console operator nearly seven years ago, Perron has supervised a staff of five console operators who process, assign and dispatch calls from employees requesting assistance ranging from heating and odor complaints to power outages and fire alarms. Every month, these operators receive approximately 7,500 calls requesting assistance in more than 20 buildings, including the

University Campus, Century Drive, Biotech One, Biotech Two and the Auburn and Shrewsbury campuses. Perron oversees the proper and timely management of these calls, which happen around the clock, seven days a week.

Points of Pride

As lead console operator, Perron has enjoyed the different aspects of his supervisory position, including training all console operators, creating books to guide them during emergency procedures that occur frequently, and reviewing and revising a master maintenance book of procedures and policies for facilities departments both on and off campus. "Every day brings new calls and concerns to address, and I try to brighten everyone's day by dispatching their calls promptly," Perron said.

Associate Director of Facilities Maintenance Brian P. McCarthy, who nominated Perron, commented on his out-

standing commitment to the institution as well as his positive attitude and rapport with colleagues. "His customer service is unmatched and his willingness to do whatever it takes to get the job done is unsurpassed," said McCarthy. "Joe's ability to meet the expectations of this department while handling the unscheduled events that assail him daily is nothing short of remarkable."



Calendar

information infocus

Public Affairs on the move

The Office of Public Affairs and Publications has moved. Formerly located across from the cafeteria in the hospital, we can now be found in the Medical School on the third floor, occupying rooms S3-404 through S3-428, across from the Department of Cell Biology. Our phone numbers and e-mail addresses will remain the same, and we will maintain the bulletin boards in the hallway adjacent to our former space. Our old offices are being renovated for another purpose; we expect to be in these temporary offices for several months.

■ **Looking Backwards to the Future: The Holocaust Center, Boston North**, a program featuring Harriet Wacks, executive director of the The Holocaust Center, Boston North Inc., will be held on Thursday, April 10, from noon to 1 p.m. at the Medical School in rooms S2-351/352. Ms. Wacks will discuss the importance of documenting and preserving history; reducing hatred, prejudice, ignorance and indifference through education; and preventing future tragedies through the study of the universal lessons from the Holocaust. For information, contact Nellie Toney via global e-mail.

■ **The Eighth Annual Educational Recognition Awards Ceremony** will take place at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, April 15, in the Arthur and Martha Pappas Amphitheatre (Amphitheatre I). The ceremony celebrates the educational achievements of faculty and students from all three schools. A reception will follow immediately in the Faculty Conference Room. All are welcome to attend.

Chancellor's Forum

Wednesday, April 16, 2008 • 12:15 to 1:15 p.m.
Arthur and Martha Pappas Amphitheatre (I)

Suggestions for agenda items and questions may be sent (via e-mail or interoffice) to Rosalie Noone in Public Affairs.

■ In celebration of International Earth Day, the UMass Medical School Green Team will host the Third Annual Earth Day Festival in the old Medical School Lobby on Friday, April 18, from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. This year's festival will feature displays and booths sponsored by local organizations, including the Greater Worcester Land Trust, Broad Meadow Brook Audubon, Wachusett Greenways, Bio Systems and Trader Joe's, among others. There will be free raffles for prizes. In addition, Jeff Stein, AIA, head of the School of Architecture at Boston Architectural College, will be speaking on how buildings impact the environment from noon to 12:30 p.m. in the Faculty Conference Room. For information, contact Heather Strom at 6-1729 or send an e-mail to GreenTeam@umassmed.edu.



Kelly Holland (left) shares his match news with classmate Joshua Pacheco whose son, Everett, sleeps through the excitement. Holland matched with the family medicine residency program at Swedish Medical Center in Seattle, while Pacheco landed an emergency medicine residency at Albany Medical Center Hospital. Held on March 20 this year, the yearly Match Day is when all fourth-year medical students from across the country discover where they'll begin their careers as physicians. More than half of UMMS students will be entering primary care residencies and 55 will be staying in Massachusetts.

grants infocus

□ **Jason J. Chen**, PhD, assistant professor of medicine: *Modulation of a Novel Cell Cycle Checkpoint by the HPV Oncogene E6*, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, one year, \$243,750; recommended for one more year, \$203,125

□ **Terry S. Field**, DSc, associate professor of medicine: *Proactive Risk Reduction in Medication Prescribing in the Ambulatory Setting*, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, one year, \$199,975

□ **Lisa Fortuna**, MD, assistant professor of psychiatry: *CBT Treatment for PTSD and SUDs in Minority Youth*, National Institute on Drug Abuse, one year, \$149,600; recommended for three more years, \$442,779

□ **Marc R. Freeman**, PhD, assistant professor of neurobiology: *Molecular Mechanisms of Reactive Gliosis*, Fidelity Investments, two years, \$400,000

□ **Uri Galili**, PhD, professor of medicine: *Xenograft-like Rejection of Tumors in A-Gal Glycolipids*, National Cancer Institute, one year, \$304,688; recommended for two more years, \$609,376

□ **Jeffrey Geller**, MD, assistant professor of family medicine & community health: *The Impact of Competency-Based Outpatient Commitment Orders*, The Stanley Medical Research Institute, one year, \$80,000

□ **Steven R. Grossman**, MD, PhD, assistant professor of cancer biology and medicine: *Role of CtBP in p53-Independent ARF Tumor Suppression*, American Cancer Society, three years, \$800,000

□ **Lawrence J. Hayward**, MD, PhD, associate professor of neurology and physiology: *Aberrant SOD1 Hydrophobicity and Protein Interactions in ALS*, Muscular Dystrophy Association, one year, \$98,102

□ **John F. Keane Jr.**, MD, professor of medicine: *Hypochlorite-Mediated Impairment of Endothelial Function*, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, one year, \$382,827

□ **Michael Krashes**, GSBS student in the lab of **Scott Waddell**, PhD, associate professor of neurobiology: *Investigating Octopaminergic Neural Circuitry in Olfactory Appetitive Memory*, National Institute on Drug Abuse, \$26,285; recommended for two more years, \$52,570

□ **Kathleen M. Mazor**, EdD, MS, associate professor of medicine: *Medical Errors in Children: What Are We Missing?*, The Meyers Primary Care Institute, one year, \$15,000

□ **Colleen McGuire**, MPM, Program Manager, Injury Free Coalition for Kids: *Teen R.I.D.E.*, American Public Health Association, one year, \$5,000

□ **Katherine F. Ruiz de Luzuriaga**, MD, professor of pediatrics and medicine: *Molecular & Biologic Properties of Transmitted HIV-1 Variants in a Mother-Child Cohort*, The Campbell Foundation, one year, \$71,973

□ **Sean Ryder**, PhD, assistant professor of biochemistry & molecular pharmacology: *Regulation of Maternal Notch Translation in Nematode Development*, March of Dimes Foundation, two years, \$150,000

□ **Kathleen Walsh**, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics: *Errors in Home Prescription Medication Use Among Children with Cancer*, The Meyers Primary Care Institute, one year, \$15,000

focus

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