A Strategy for Growth

This year, UMass Medical School and UMass Memorial Health Care established a strategic plan for the University of Massachusetts Academic Health Sciences Center, reflecting our organizations’ common purpose to serve the public interest, both locally and globally. The Center emerged from a laudable four-decade history of providing superlative primary care education and care for our community that was further notably characterized over the last decade by outstanding basic science research, culminating in the awarding of the 2006 Nobel Prize to Dr. Craig Mello for the discovery of RNA interference (RNAi).

Indeed, the Medical School and UMass Memorial are experiencing aspects of the “life sciences moment” occurring throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As a public medical school and its complementary clinical system, we are committed over the next five years to partner with the commonwealth to realize bold new objectives, such as the $1 billion Life Sciences Initiative and the mandate for universal health insurance.

In doing so, we also aim to transform the practice of medicine around the world through continued excellence in basic, clinical, and translational research, while recommitting our Center to the safe, high-quality healthcare, superior education, and impressive community service that distinguishes us among our peers. Our ultimate goal is to become an unrivaled life sciences leader and a world-renowned academic health sciences center. We are energized by the work before us. As we expand the enrollment in our three graduate schools, continue with our strategic planning, and recruit talented faculty and staff, we believe we will be propelled to national recognition as a superior academic health sciences center.

Michael F. Collins, MD
CHAIRMAN
SCHOOL FOR THE HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
John G. O’Brien
PRESIDENT AND CEO UMASS MEMORIAL HEALTH CARE
Charles J. Pagnam
VICE CHANCELLOR FOR DEVELOPMENT UMASS MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

UMass Memorial Health Care and UMass Medical School, please contact us at 508-856-5520 or e-mail giving@umassmed.edu.

Medical Center Ranked Number One in Massachusetts for Heart Attack Treatment

UMass Memorial Medical Center ranks number one in Massachusetts and number two in the United States for heart attack survival according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). UMass Memorial was one of just nine hospitals in the nation that was statistically far superior than the national average in the reported mortality rate for acute myocardial infarction (AMI).

“Since 2005 our focus has been on improving quality in all areas of the Medical Center, especially cardiovascular care,” said John F. Keaney Jr., MD, chief of cardiovascular medicine and professor of medicine. “This report is proof positive that our processes are sound and robust and that when it comes to treating heart attack patients, UMass Memorial is among the very best in the country.”

The latest CMS report adds to a string of achievements and recognitions:

- The survival rate for patients having coronary artery bypass surgery is more than 99 percent—better than the state average of 97.8 percent.
- For the past two years, the Society of Thoracic Surgeons awarded its highest designation—three stars—to the cardiac surgery program, ranking UMass Memorial in the top 12 percent of heart programs.

Continued on page 2

Ambros Receives Lasker Award, ‘America’s Nobel’

Victor Ambros, PhD, was celebrated by his colleagues at a Medical School event following the award announcement September 13.

Victor R. Ambros, PhD, has been honored with one of the nation’s most prestigious awards for basic and clinical medical research. Dr. Ambros, a professor of molecular medicine at UMass Medical School, received the 2008 Lasker Award for Basic Medical Research with co-recipients Gary Ruvkun, PhD, of Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, and David Baulcombe, PhD, of the University of Cambridge, at a ceremony in New York City on September 26.

First awarded in 1945, the Lasker Awards have been long considered “America’s Nobels,” and represent the highest recognition for distinguished achievement, primarily because of the extremely rigorous process of nomination and selection conducted by a jury of the world’s top scientists.

Dr. Ambros, Ruvkun and Baulcombe were recognized for their work in identifying microRNAs, the short, single-stranded RNA molecules that have been found to play a critical role in gene regulation. RNA has a primary function of protein creation within a cell, and since proteins perform the majority of a cell’s functions, the understanding of RNA and its many classes and purposes is vital to learning more about the causes of disease.
Michael Collins Appointed UMass Medical School’s Sixth Chancellor

The University of Massachusetts Board of Trustee’s voted on September 26, 2008, to appoint Michael F. Collins, MD, the permanent Chancellor of the University’s Medical School campus.

Dr. Collins, 53, who will continue to serve as the University’s senior vice president for the health sciences, had been interim chancellor of UMass Medical School, and previously served as chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Boston.

The vote came after UMass President Jack M. Wilson recommended Collins to the board. In August, the 23-member University of Massachusetts Medical School Search Committee was unanimous in its recommendation of Collins to President Wilson, with committee Chair Philip W. Johnston describing Collins as “an experienced and effective leader, a leader with a vision” and as “the clear choice.

“This search committee has worked hard, has surveyed the higher education landscape and is firm in its position that Dr. Collins will be an effective leader as the Medical School seeks to push the boundaries of medical education and research and discovery excellence,” said Johnston, who also serves as a University of Massachusetts trustee. Nobel Laureate Craig C. Mello, PhD, Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, the Blais University Investigator, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, the Blais University Investigator, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, the Blais University Investigator, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, the Blais University Investigator, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, the Blais University Investigator, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, the Blais University Investigator, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, the Blais University Investigator, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, the Blais University Investigator, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, the Blais University Investigator, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, the Blais University Investigator, the How
Tufts University, where he served as clinical professor of internal medicine and associate dean of Government and Medical Affairs in the School of Medicine and as a senior fellow at University College of Citizenship and Public Service. Collins is a 1977 cum laude graduate of the College of the School campus community that perspective of the UMass Medical children, Michael F. Collins Jr., his wife, Maryellen, have two graduate of Tufts University from 2002-2008. He is a 1981 chair of the board of trustees Holy Cross, where he served as chair of the board of trustees from 2002-2008. He is a 1981 graduate of the College of the College of Citizenship and Public Service. as a senior fellow at University College in the School of Medicine and as a Government and Medical Affairs as clinical professor of internal

“it is very clear from the perspective of the UMBC Medical School campus community that Dr. Collins’ outstanding personal and professional attributes and leadership abilities have already created tremendous momentum toward reaching our shared goals.” — Terence R. Flotte, MD

Holy Cross, where he served as chair of the board of trustees from 2002-2008. He is a 1981 graduate of Tufts University School of Medicine. He and his wife, Maryellen, have two children, Michael F. Collins Jr., and Elizabeth M. Collins. “It is very clear from the perspective of the UMBC Medical School campus community that specific accomplishments of the past year have included bringing the campus together to create our strategic plan, further enhancing our partnerships with UMBC Memorial and the other UMBC campuses, and providing a bold vision for how the Life Sciences Initiative can be made relevant to the health of the people of Massachusetts.”

HEALTH ADVICE

Tips from the Experts:
Preventing Youth Soccer Injuries

A quick drive around the region is all it takes to realize the growing popularity of soccer. On any given day, one will see numerous playing fields filled with youngsters enjoying this sport. Although soccer is relatively safe, injuries can occur.

“The most common soccer-related injuries my colleagues and I see at the UMass Memorial Sports Medicine Center are ankle sprains, knee injuries, shin bruises, and thigh and groin muscle strains,” explained Brian Busconi, MD, chief of sports medicine and arthroscopy for UMass Memorial and associate professor of orthopedic & physical rehabilitation and pediatrics at UMass Medical School. “However, there are a few, easy-to-follow guidelines parents and their young players can follow to minimize the chance of injury.”

Stay in shape throughout the year by running, swimming or bicycling. This helps keep young muscles and ligaments in shape, flexible and strong.

Always perform slow, easy, gradual stretches before practices or games.

During practice or games, stay well hydrated by drinking water or an appropriate sports beverage to help avoid dehydration and muscle cramps.

Young soccer players should always wear appropriate equipment.

It is recommended that players start the season with a new pair of properly fitted and comfortable cleats made specifically for playing soccer. Shin guards are a must to prevent lower leg injuries and mouth guards can help prevent dental injuries and even concussions.

Secure eyeglasses with a sports band and make sure the lenses are made of shatterproof materials.

Limit the number of sports a youngster plays at one time. Playing multiple sports at the same time does not give a young body time to rest and heal.

If a young soccer player is injured, get an immediate evaluation from a trained medical professional.

The UMass Memorial Sports Medicine Center is recognized throughout the region for its high-quality diagnostic, treatment, rehabilitation and sport-specific conditioning programs for athletes and active individuals of all ages. Founded by the noted former medical director for the Boston Red Sox, Arthur Pappas, MD, professor of orthopedics & physical rehabilitation and pediatrics at UMass Medical School, the center offers a team of fellowship-trained sports medicine specialists in Worcester, Westborough and Milford. For more information, call 888-244-6094.

It is very clear from the perspective of the UMass Medical School community that Dr. Collins’ outstanding personal and professional attributes and leadership abilities have already created tremendous momentum toward reaching our shared goals.” — Terence R. Flotte, MD

O’Brien Receives Mass Hospital Association Award

John G. O’Brien, president and CEO of UMass Memorial Health Care, received the William L. Lane Hospital Award at the Massachusetts Hospital Association’s (MHA) Annual Dinner in June, recognized for his “outstanding efforts to advocate on behalf of his hospital, his commitment to his institution’s mission, and the impact of his work on the health care community.”

“Under his inclusive, participatory style of leadership, combining fiscal responsibility and community mindedness, he has transformed the system he heads,” said MHA Board Chair Bob Norton.

“This is a great surprise, and a tremendous honor, and I am deeply touched by the recognition,” O’Brien said at the ceremony. “Although I’m the one standing here in front of the microphone and accepting this award, there are about 12,000 UMass Memorial employees who truly deserve the credit.” — John O’Brien
Reaching Out to Our Global Neighbors

UMass Memorial faculty-clinicians make a difference in the lives of patients every day, and many also use their expertise to improve the well-being of patients worldwide. Profiled below are just some of those who make a difference far beyond Central Massachusetts.

Prevention Is at the Core of Care
Although the importance of preventive health care is widely accepted, access to basic care is too often unavailable, particularly in underdeveloped countries. In March, UMass Memorial clinicians and first- and second-year UMass Medical School students traveled to the Dominican Republic for a week-long mission to help bridge this gap in care.

In the city of La Romana, students and staff from obstetrics and gynecology, family medicine and nursing established traveling clinics to reach hundreds of sugarcane workers and their families. The team traveled by school bus to villages to perform basic physical exams and treat minor medical conditions such as rashes and infections.

A large part of the trip was educating villagers about the benefits of preventive care, including contraception and cervical screening, and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy. More than 100 women were also encouraged to receive their first Pap smears.

Ty Fraga, ob/gyn education coordinator, also traveled with the group to the Dominican Republic in 2007 and was amazed at the difference they saw a year later. “We returned to one of the same villages and it was so gratifying to see that residents had listened to our teachings and were now taking care of their health,” she said.

Patients identified as needing surgical care were treated at a local hospital by ob/gyn specialists Dawn S. Tasillo, MD, assistant professor, and Dina Deldon-Salmin, DO, clinical instructor. Thirteen surgeries were performed, primarily hysterectomies, tubal ligations and removal of masses.

“The trip was a wonderful experience and extremely satisfying,” said Dr. Tasillo. “It gave me the opportunity to focus solely on each patient and reinforced why I chose a career in medicine.”

The Clinical Team of Physicians, Nurses, Residents and Medical Students in Ecuador

Medical Mission Brings New Appreciation for Life
When orthopedic surgeon Anthony S. Lapinsky, MD, learned about Mercy Ships, he became interested due to the time he spent in the Navy. One year later, he began a self-financed volunteer mission aboard the Africa Mercy docked in Monrovia, Liberia. The Africa Mercy is a floating hospital equipped with six state-of-the-art operating rooms, an intensive care unit, a CT scanner and 78 beds.

During his two-week mission, Dr. Lapinsky performed reconstructive orthopedic surgery on pediatric patients and a self-financed volunteer mission to the Dominican Republic.

The clinical team of physicians, nurses, residents and medical students in Ecuador

Advances in Imaging Aid Research and Patient Care

UMass Medical School researchers and clinicians who observe and track the progress of pulmonary, cardiac, neurological and other diseases are excited about the new Philips Achieva 3.0T X-series MRI in the Advanced MRI Center. This technology allows them to use innovative, non-invasive imaging techniques to reveal functional information about the body’s systems and organs, thus helping researchers develop new therapeutic treatments for patients.

“With these techniques we’re able to see parts of the body or functions better than with a conventional 1.5T MRI scan,” said Mitchell S. Albert, PhD, professor of radiology and director of MRI Research. “This is a huge asset for researchers and boosts our ability to do basic and clinical science in a number of different areas.” The 3T MRI machine can also image faster and with more detail than the more common 1.5T MRI. For example, with a 3T MRI, researchers can record images and brain functions that reveal subtle details or changes. One UMass Medical School study seeks to map the areas of the brain in smokers that respond to nicotine. The hope is that by comparing these functional brain images to those of nonsmokers, researchers may be able to develop better therapies for people who want to quit smoking.

Dr. Albert is one of the pioneers of Hyperpolarized Gas MRI, which uses a high-powered laser to align the nuclei of helium or xenon. He received a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers and nine patents for the invention of this technology. Using hyperpolarized helium MRI, researchers can view lung function and stage the progression of treatment for pulmonary diseases such as cystic fibrosis, asthma and emphysema, which is not possible with conventional proton MRI. The advantage of Hyperpolarized Gas MRI over conventional imaging such as CT or x-rays is that it’s less invasive. “Because it doesn’t use radiation like an x-ray or CT, researchers can repeatedly scan during treatment,” said Albert. “This can be used to monitor the progression of the disease over time and track the effectiveness of treatments more accurately.”

Albert is exploring the potential to use hyperpolarized xenon to visualize brain function as opposed to a conventional fMRI image allows for much higher MR signals without background noise. Advancement of this imaging technique could lead to further insights into the progress of mental illnesses or other brain diseases such as multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s and stroke.

Albert, who joined UMass Medical School from Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Woman’s Hospital, is currently assembling a multidisciplinary team of world-class researchers, scientists, engineers and clinicians that will advance MRI research and bring this new technology to clinical settings.
with congenital club foot and other acquired limb deformities caused by infection and lack of nutrition. One day was dedicated to deciding which children were most operable. “It was hard to tell someone you couldn’t help them. These were surgeries that would not get done if we weren’t there since no one in the country knows how to perform them,” he said.

Liberia is struggling to rebuild after years of civil war. Much of the country lacks electricity and running water, which prohibits many orthopedic surgeries. “In the U.S., there are social services to ensure that there are ways to survive even if there are no means. In Liberia, that is not the case,” said Lapinsky, an assistant professor of orthopedics & physical rehabilitation at UMass Medical School.

When reflecting on his trip, Lapinsky not only thinks of the impact he made, but also of what was left behind. “No one person can do enough; there is so much to still be done in so many places. Being there opened my eyes to how fortunate I am. I took away more than I gave.”

SURGERY TRIP OFFERS OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

What began as a medical mission for a plastic surgeon and fellow, anesthesiologists and nurses in 1991 has evolved into a biannual volunteer surgery trip for dozens of clinicians.

Led by UMass Memorial plastic surgeon and professor of surgery Douglas M. Rothkopf, MD, a team of physicians, nurses, residents and medical students recently traveled once again to Salinas, Ecuador, equipped with surgical supplies, toys, clothing and soccer equipment for local families. More than 300 adults and children from the fishing village were evaluated to identify the most operable patients.

In all, the team performed 37 procedures, largely for cleft lip and palate as well as congenital hand disorders. Patients not only benefited from physical improvements, but also from a functional standpoint. Those with repaired cleft lips and palates, for example, are now able to eat normally and will see improvements in nutrition and speech.

While lack of access to care prevents many Ecuadorians from receiving medical treatment, those who do seek it out are often unable to pay for the medical supplies needed for their surgeries.

“The differences between our medical systems are tremendous,” said Florence Cherry, RN. “We tend to be a disposable society. The tools and instruments we take for granted are often unavailable or are reused in Ecuador.”

Overall, the trip was a positive experience for UMass Memorial staff. “I go back year after year because we have the opportunity to make a big difference,” concluded Mary Camosse, RN, MSN, CNOR. “The surgical results are instantaneous, and we immediately see the gratitude of patients and their families.”

PINK, Lighting the Way to a Cure

October 2, 2008

UMASS MEDICAL SCHOOL CAMPUS

Aaron Lazare Medical Research Building

PINK celebrates and remembers those who have fought breast cancer. The program benefits breast cancer research and patient care at UMass Medical School and UMass Memorial Cancer Center, and attendees will learn about the latest advances in treatment and research, as well as hear a panel of survivors tell their stories. Voluntary PINK candle donations are $1,000 or $500 for a PINK “Flower of the Community” candle, $50 per PINK votive or $125 for three votives. Admission is free. Call 508-856-5520 or e-mail events@umassmed.edu.

WXLO Raise for a Cure

October 16, 2008

UMASS MEDICAL SCHOOL LOBBY

Radio Station 104.5 WXLO morning DJs Steve and Jen will broadcast live to raise funds for breast cancer research and care. Tune in to hear from researchers, physicians and patients. Call 508-856-5520 or e-mail events@umassmed.edu.

Shining Star Gala and Benefit Auction

October 25, 2008

DCU CENTER, WORCESTER

This UMass Memorial Children’s Medical Center event supports pediatric health care and research. Tickets are $150 per person for this elegant cocktail reception and dinner dance featuring both a live and silent auction and the Hip Pocket Orchestra, one of Boston’s premier dance bands. Sponsorship opportunities are available. Call 508-856-5520 or e-mail events@umassmed.edu.

UMass Medical School Reunion 2008

November 8, 2008

UMASS MEDICAL SCHOOL CAMPUS

Celebrating School of Medicine anniversary classes of ’78, ’83, ’88, ’93, ’98 and ’03. Registration, walking tours and a campus update take place from 2 – 5 p.m., with a cocktail reception from 5 – 7 p.m. Contact the Office of Alumni Relations at 508-856-1593, e-mail alumni@umassmed.edu or visit www.networkumass.com/medical.

Expert Named Siff Chair in Family Health Research

JAN A. FRAZIER, MD, an expert in child psychopharmacology and child and adolescent neuropsychiatry, has been appointed vice chair of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at UMass Medical School and UMass Memorial Medical Center. In addition, Dr. Frazier has been named the Robert M. and Shirley S. Siff Chair in Family Health Research through which she will establish research collaborations with an interdisciplinary team of basic and clinical scientists from throughout the Medical School. Dr. Frazier will arrive in October and joins the institutions from Harvard Medical School and Cambridge Health Alliance, where she was the director of Child Psychopharmacology, co-director of the Center for Child and Adolescent Development and director of the Child and Adolescent Neuropsychiatric Research Program.

The Siff Chair was established in 2003 to support the quest to uncover the causes of, and identify effective treatments for, neurologi- cal and developmental disorders, especially autism, in children of adoptive and birth families. Experts estimate that three to six children out of every 1,000 will have autism, according to the National Institute of Neurologi- cal Disorders and Stroke, which reports that scientists aren’t certain what causes autism, but believe it’s likely that both genetics and environment play a part.

“We are delighted that Dr. Frazier has been selected for the chair we endowed at UMass. We are excited about her research and the impact it could have in shaping care for patients of this and future generations,” said Robert Siff who, with his wife, Shirley S. Siff, EdD, became interested in research into developmental disorders when one of their grandchildren was diagnosed with autism. Mr. Siff was chair and chief operating officer of B-W Footwear Company, Ambassador Shoe and BWA International. Dr. Siff is an associate in psychiatry, currently in private practice after serving the Worces- ter Public Schools as a school psychologist for ten years. She is a member of the UMass Memorial Foundation Board of Directors and founded its Community Partnership Committee.

Frazier received her medical degree at Dartmouth Medical School and served her residency in adult psychiatry at Tufts Medical Center. She completed a clinical fellowship in child and adolescent psychiatry at Bradley Hospital, a major teaching hospital for Brown University. She also completed a research fellow- ship at the National Institute of Mental Health. Frazier, who is widely published and has received numerous honors for her work, has been appointed to several national committees and editorial boards.
Physician, Nurse Recognized By MDA

RICHARD S. IRWIN, MD, AND CYNTHIA T. FRENCH, NP, MS, of UMass Memorial Medical Center were awarded the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) Lou Gehrig Humanitarian Award for their work providing interdisciplinary, patient-focused care to people with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and their families for more than 25 years. Because ALS affects muscles throughout the body, patients often are seen by numerous specialists during the course of their illness. Dr. Irwin and French noticed that most of their patients had difficulty managing appointments with multiple doctors at multiple locations. They worked to foster an interdisciplinary approach to treatment with services centralized in one location.

Drawing upon Irwin and French’s collaborative approach to care, the MDA/ALS Center at UMass Memorial Medical Center—University Campus brings together pulmonologists, neurologists, gastroenterologists, plastic surgeons and other physicians to treat ALS patients. Additionally, care givers and physicians teach patients and family members how to cope with ALS; visits are scheduled consecutively on the same day and families are taught how to set-up and operate medical equipment in a home setting.

Irwin and French received the award from David Chad, MD, director of the MDA/ALS Center at UMass Memorial Medical Center, and last year’s recipient.

Quality Care Begins with Primary Care

TELI LEUNG, MD, who moved from China to Boston with her family when she was two, knew she wanted to pursue her medical education and training in Massachusetts. She also knew that she wanted to be a primary care physician — developing long-term relationships with patients and dealing with a variety of conditions and illnesses through all stages of life.

After receiving an undergraduate degree from Boston University, she chose UMass Medical School for her medical training, partly because of its mission to train primary care physicians. She stayed another three years for residency training. Because continuing in an academic and research setting was important to her, Dr. Leung chose the natural path when it came to decide where to practice medicine after residency — right here in Worcester at UMass Memorial Medical Center.

In August, Leung joined 25 other primary care physicians as an attending physician at the Primary Care Clinic in the Benedict Building on the University Campus. In addition to providing general primary care, she will also make referrals for specialty care and testing. The clinic handles approximately 50,000 patient visits annually.

“There are so many opportunities here. In addition to my clinical work, I can teach and mentor medical students while also participating in research and spending time as a hospitalist,” said Leung. “It’s unlimited here in what things I can explore in my career.”

For all those reasons, and more — familiar faces, knowledge of the system and strong encouragement from colleagues — Leung chose to stay “home.”

Primary care physicians are well represented at UMass Memorial Health Care:

- Pediatrics: 131
- Internal Medicine: 226
- Family Medicine: 149

UMass Memorial Launches Ad Campaign

TODAY, consumers have many choices when it comes to health care, UMass Memorial is proud that tens of thousands of people rely on UMass Memorial Medical Center and its four community hospitals for high-quality, safe care delivered close to home.

Letting more people know about UMass Memorial is a priority, and there are many strategies to spread this message. One is to go to the airways with the story of the great care at the five UMass Memorial hospitals. “We surveyed our community and learned that not everyone knows that there is no need to travel to Boston for the latest advances in medicine,” said UMass Memorial President and CEO John O’Brien. “So we decided to tell them about our great work, using television, radio and the Web, and used ‘It’s all right here’ as the campaign tagline.”

Many UMass Memorial staff members are seen in the new TV spots, and the radio ads feature testimonials from patients cared for by our physicians and staff. The TV ads run on cable stations such as Bravo, Lifetime, HGTV, Fox and public television; the radio ads on WSRS, WXLO, WTAG and WBUR. Ads appear on Web sites such as boston.com, revolutionhealth.com and webmd.com as well.

Go to carerighthere.org and click on the “Audio & Video” link at the top of the page to catch all the excitement.
UMass Medical School Tackles Diabetes Epidemic

In the July 2008 issue of Obesity, a study reported that more than 86 percent of adults in the United States will be overweight or obese by 2030, with related health care costs projected to reach $956.9 billion. Obesity is linked to the growing diabetes epidemic, and UMass Medical School researchers are collaborating with colleagues at other top institutions as part of the Pfizer Insulin Resistance Pathway (IRP) Project to further understand the relationship between type 2 diabetes and obesity, opening the door to the development of new drugs to combat them.

IRP, a three-year, $14 million project funded by Pfizer, enables UMass Medical School scientists to work with researchers from the University of California Santa Barbara, California Institute of Technology and Massachusetts Institute of Technology as well as Entelos, a biopharmaceutical company, to identify new pathways that cause cells to become insulin resistant.

“There is an open spirit of collaboration within this consortium that enables us to take on many different and new approaches,” said Norman Kennedy, PhD, assistant professor of molecular medicine, who will lead the research at UMass Medical School. “I believe we’ll see progress as we provide expertise and share our data with another. The end result of this research will define new targets for this medical need and ultimately, provide patients with better treatments.”

The collaboration allows Dr. Kennedy and other researchers to publish and patent their basic biology discoveries. If the three-year phase proves beneficial, Pfizer will implement an additional two-year phase that will allow Kennedy and his lab to continue their research and study other insulin-related areas.

“This is a new, global approach to research, and there are many opportunities for the consortium to serve as a model for future collaborations between research institutions and drug companies,” said Kennedy.

UMass Medical School Expands Class Size to Meet Health Care Needs

In June 2007, the Massachusetts Medical Society released results of its 2006 Physician Workforce Study. The study contained an alarming finding: a shortage of primary care physicians, particularly in internal medicine and family practice. According to the medical society, the most critical shortage facing community hospitals is family practitioners: 54 percent of those hospitals are currently experiencing shortages in this specialty, more than double the average—21 percent—over the last three years.

As part of an overall plan to help address physician workforce shortages in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and consistent with the recommendations of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) that medical schools should increase class sizes where possible, UMass Medical School began a process this fall of increasing the incoming class for the School of Medicine.

“This decision is consistent with our own discussions during the strategic planning process with UMass Memorial Health Care where it became clear that UMass Medical School is uniquely positioned to help build the workforce of the future—a workforce that will meet the needs of the commonwealth and the Worcester community,” said Chancellor Michael F. Collins and Dean of the School of Medicine Terence R. Flotte in a statement to the institutional communities.

The class size will incrementally increase over the next four to five years. As a first step, the School of Medicine admitted 111 in-state students and three out-of-state students (for the MD/PhD degree), for a total incoming class of 114 this fall. The Class of 2012 represents 76 cities and towns and 11 counties across the state and includes 59 women and 55 men. The average GPA of the entering class is 3.65; the average age, 24. Several students are over age 30 and 14 members of the class are first-generation college students.

In addition, the nation’s population has grown by more than 40 million since 1980 while life spans of Americans continue to increase, creating needs for additional and longer lengths of care.

UMass Medical School’s pledge to train more physicians also reflects the focus of schools across the nation to address specific areas of health care in their communities, including elder care, services in rural and underserved locations and disparities in health care.
The American Board of Family Medicine has awarded two of its five annual Pisacano Leadership Scholarships to University of Massachusetts Medical School students Olga Valdman and Lara Jirmanus, who were selected through a competitive process that seeks out graduating students demonstrating the potential to become leaders in the practice of family medicine. "It is quite rare to have more than one scholar selected from any particular school," said Robert J. Cattoi, executive director of the Pisacano Leadership Foundation. "This speaks to the quality of candidates from UMass Medical School who embrace the philosophy of family medicine." Jirmanus, Class of 2010, from Medford, Mass. and Valdman, Class of 2009, from Walpole, Mass. and Lincoln Primary Care—received the maximum four stars in all reported categories. View the full report at www.mhpp.org.

Almost 400 friends, staff and supporters of Wing Memorial Hospital joined in tours and a ribbon-cutting celebration of the completion of the new 58,000-square-foot addition to the UMass Memorial member hospital in Palmer. The new addition, named the Country Bank Pavilion in honor of a $750,000 donation from Country Bank, opened to patients June 23. The $26 million addition increases the number of beds at Wing from 52 to 60, adds a new entry and registration area, adds operating rooms, private inpatient rooms and intensive care unit rooms, and allows for expansion of other patient care areas and services at the hospital.

Two fellowship-trained foot and ankle subspecialists — Lorenzo Gamez, MD, and Abhay Patel, MD — recently began seeing patients at the Hahnemann and Memorial campuses. They join James Karadimos, DPM, chief of podiatry, in the Foot and Ankle Division of the Department of Orthopedics & Physical Rehabilitation. Both Dr. Gamez and Dr. Patel evaluate and treat the full range of foot and ankle problems including arthritis, fractures, fallen arches, heel pain, bunions, hammertoes, recurrent ankle sprains and diabetic foot problems. To schedule an appointment, call 508-334-5500. A new Foot and Ankle Center is scheduled to open on the Hahnemann Campus in early 2009.

In September, UMass Memorial Medical Group health providers opened a new building at 91 Water Street, Milford, adjacent to the Shaw’s Supermarket. The new, three-story building is 21,000 square feet, and provides orthopedics, renal medicine, surgery and obstetrics and gynecology health care. "This is an investment in the community. It reflects the strong, ongoing commitment of UMass Memorial Health Care, along with our affiliate partner Milford Regional Medical Center, to provide access to high quality medical care and services to the physicians and residents of the Blackstone Valley," said William F. Corbett, MD, vice president of Community Practices for UMass Memorial Medical Group and a primary care physician in Shrewsbury for more than 22 years. For more information about the Milford office, call 508-334-1000.

Contact Information:
UMass Memorial Medical Center 508-334-1000
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Memorial Campus 119 Belmont Street, Worcester
University Campus 55 Lake Avenue North, Worcester
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