The UAB Health System (UABHS) will purchase the 17.5-acre HealthSouth Medical Center on Birmingham’s Southside for $33 million. The purchase is contingent upon regulatory approval. In the interim, UABHS undertook management of the hospital effective August 1.

The complete purchase will include the main hospital campus, two professional office buildings, more than 1,400 parking spaces, and outlying structures.

With the sale pending, UABHS CEO David Hoidal says the university will transfer some University Hospital and UABHS patient care to the facility. “These agreements enable University Hospital to grow its physical plant to meet expanding demand for patient services,” Hoidal says.

In January, 2007, UAB also will assume full ownership of the gamma knife, stationed at the Southside campus. The university already has half-ownership of the machine, which has been used in 2,651 sessions since its purchase in 1996.

HealthSouth Campus

“We plan on operating the facility as a hospital that is part of the UAB Health System and are evaluating what permanent services and operations, perhaps even the UAB Callahan Eye Foundation Hospital, will move there after purchase is finalized,” Hoidal continues. During the management agreement, some UAB services, including orthopaedics, plastic surgery, otolaryngology, and gynecologic oncology will have privileges to provide services at the HealthSouth campus.

“We look forward to re-energizing this hospital and to the facility becoming a productive affiliate of the UAB Health System,” UABHS Executive Vice President Steve Pickett says.

Other items of note about the sale:

• UAB is collaborating with HealthSouth to stabilize the workforce, medical staff, and patient volumes at HealthSouth Southside.

• The university is implementing an array of initiatives to make the facility the community success it once was. HealthSouth Rehabilitation Corp. purchased the HealthSouth Medical Center (which evolved from the old South Highlands Infirmary, founded in 1910 as Birmingham’s second oldest hospital) in 1989 after several years of expansion.

“The hospital’s purchase is contingent upon Certificate of Need (CON) approval, and it could take until the end of the calendar year,” Hoidal concludes.

UAB Maintains Its Strong NIH Rankings

The UAB School of Health Related Professions (SHRP) ranks No. 1 among peer schools in funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). SHRP, which trains professionals in fields such as nutrition, physical and occupational therapy and health administration, has been either No. 1 or No. 2 for the past 4 years.

The School of Optometry maintained its consistent top 5 presence, moving up one notch to No. 3. Overall, UAB held its No. 20 spot among higher education institutions in the United States in 2004 data just released by NIH, with some $243 million in research funding.

“Our faculty and staff continue to demonstrate on a national, competitive basis the value of the research conducted at UAB,” President Carol Garrison said. “We look forward to this national recognition increasing as we continue to grow our research enterprise in terms of resources and people dedicated to furthering scientific advances.”

The rankings for other schools receiving NIH funding are: Public Health No. 12, Medicine No. 18, Dentistry No. 27, Nursing No. 35, and Engineering No. 59. Departments within the School of Medicine ranked in the top 10 include microbiology (No. 3), pediatrics (No. 3), obstetrics/gynecology (No. 4), surgery (No. 6), emergency medicine (No. 9), anatomy (No. 10) and dermatology (No. 10).

UAB affiliate Southern Research Institute ranked No. 13 among research institutes nationally.
National Cancer Institute Awards Largest Cancer Core Grant

Peter D. Emanuel, MD

UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center leaders hailed receipt of the biggest grant in its 34-year history as a vote of confidence in its efforts to bring innovative treatment and research programs to the people of Alabama and the Deep South. The five-year, $30.9 million award continues the core funding from the National Cancer Institute to the Cancer Center.

The award provides the essential core facilities and basic infrastructure that enable the Cancer Center’s 250 faculty’s ability to continue working toward a cure for the disease. Scientists and physicians use the resources of UAB’s largest center to attract additional funding on their own. Nearly $100 million in research grants and contracts currently flow through the UAB Cancer Center.

“The renewal of our basic federal grant represents the continuation of a great tradition for excellent research and patient care,” said Peter D. Emanuel, MD, acting director of the Cancer Center. “Our cutting edge research to fight cancer helps bring the best possible treatment and care to Alabamians.”

Emanuel noted that the total award was a 5% increase over the previous core grant. “At a time when the NCI budget only increased by half that percentage, clearly this exceeds our expectations,” he said. The Cancer Center undergoes a major review of its activities every 5 years, and each time its renewal process is followed closely by the UAB community. The announcement comes in the wake of recent statistics showing that cancer is the leading cause of death for Alabamians 45 to 74 years old.

The NCI classifies UAB as a “comprehensive” cancer center, a designation that signals the most advanced cancer research, treatment and education. It has maintained that status since becoming one of the nation’s original 11 comprehensive centers in 1973. Today, there are 38 such major centers nationwide – no others in Alabama and five other Deep South states.

The core grant, which begins with a $5.8 million award for the coming year, supports 15 large facilities shared by UAB scientists and physicians. The enterprise pays off with innovative research that UAB has helped apply in cancer diagnosis and treatment. The Cancer Center is particularly noted for its role in developing and testing new treatments, such as bevacizumab (manufactured by Genentech, Inc. as Avastin) and cetuximab (manufactured by ImClone Systems, Inc. as Erbitux), both approved in 2004 for the treatment of colon cancer. Emanuel said the Cancer Center in coming years will concentrate on developing programs in three emerging fields: cancer genetics, epidemiology and the link between nutrition, obesity and cancer.

The center’s research activities include nine major programs. Long-term strengths such as tumor immunology, structural biology, virology and tumor biology focus primarily on laboratory research. Others, including the women’s cancer and the neuro-oncology programs, emphasize patient interventions.

The Cancer Center’s emphasis on research brings patients the latest tools in diagnosis and treatment. Clinical studies, which provide patients access to promising new tools for battling the disease, are offered for almost every type of cancer. Laboratory scientists interact with physicians conducting clinical investigations to move research findings quickly and safely to the patient care setting. UAB also conducts numerous studies of drugs to prevent cancer, and examines strategies for cancer prevention and control.

In 2004, about 4,200 new patients received cancer treatment at UAB.

Emanuel gave credit for much of the Cancer Center’s success to its “consistent and steady leadership.” John R. Durant, MD, was director for the initial 10 years, and Albert F. Lobuglio, MD, served for 23 years until he stepped down last year. A national search for the next permanent director is currently under way.

UAB Awarded $16.3 Million for AIDS Research

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) has been awarded a 5-year, $16.3 million grant to support clinical and laboratory research in the U.S., Europe and Africa to study changes that occur in the immune system and in the HIV virus in people newly infected with HIV. The lead investigator is George M. Shaw, MD, PhD, of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at UAB.

The grant is part of the Grand Challenges in Global Health Initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In all, 43 grants totaling $436 million were awarded. The Grand Challenges in Global Health initiative was created to help researchers achieve the scientific breakthroughs needed to prevent, treat, and cure the diseases of the developing world.

Upon exposure to HIV, most individuals develop an early immune response that limits but does not stop the virus from spreading throughout the body and destroying host immune defenses. The aim of Shaw's study is to guide the development of an HIV vaccine by better understanding the initial strengths and ultimate weaknesses of the natural immune response to the virus.
UAB Receives Cancer Support Grant from the Lance Armstrong Foundation

UAB’s Center for Community Health Resource Development has received a three-year, $150,000 grant from the Lance Armstrong Foundation (LAF) to develop and implement CARES (Congregational Advocates Reaching Out and Empowering Survivors). The grant is one of 31 recently awarded by LAF to support community programs for people living with the physical, emotional and practical challenges of cancer.

The Lance Armstrong Foundation, founded in 1997 by cancer survivor, champion cyclist and seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong, provides information and resources to inspire and empower people affected by cancer. The UAB grant was awarded by LAF as part of its Community Program to provide financial support for community-focused initiatives.

“From screening and early detection to end-of-life issues, there is a real need for cancer education and support services, especially in underserved communities where residents are disproportionately affected by many diseases, including cancer,” said Mary B. Evans, who leads the project for the center, housed in the UAB School of Public Health.

The UAB initiative will work with Congregations for Public Health, a partnership of six local African-American churches that serve as health resource centers for their communities. “Through trained lay health care teams in these churches and outreach into their communities, we will identify and fill gaps in the cancer education and support services that are currently offered,” Evans said.

“The LAF grant will play a vital role in our center’s efforts to address cancer disparities. We are excited and honored to be among such an extraordinary group of recipients who all share a passion for helping people with cancer ‘live strong.’ ”

The first year of CARES will focus on identifying specific community needs; developing a curriculum, training and outreach materials; and educating pastors and lay health advisors, or congregational advocates, about cancer treatment and survivorship issues, including end-of-life issues. “In year two, we will develop and put in place plans for each church to identify and support cancer survivors and their family and friends within their congregation,” Evans said. “Year three, we will expand the program outside those congregations to the surrounding communities.”

The UAB project and other funded initiatives support the National Action Plan for Cancer Survivorship, a comprehensive plan developed by LAF and the CDC to help health organizations, physicians and caregivers understand and address the needs of cancer survivors.

“We are pleased to support UAB in its efforts to improve the quality of life of cancer survivors and their loved ones,” said Andy Miller, associate director of public health at LAF.

More information about LAF and its Community Program is available at www.livestrong.org.

UAB Programs Again Listed in U.S. News & World Report's Hospital Rankings

Two UAB Hospital specialty programs made the Top 10 and nine specialty programs are ranked in this year’s U.S. News & World Report’s annual “America’s Best Hospitals” issue. Rheumatology was ranked sixth for an unprecedented 14th consecutive year; and heart and heart surgery has leaped from 25th to 10th during the last two years.

“We are absolutely delighted that UAB Hospital continues to be ranked tops and alongside the best hospitals in the country,” said Robert R. Rich, MD, UAB senior vice president and dean of the UAB School of Medicine. “Once again, these rankings are a testament to the outstanding faculty and staff here, and the high-quality and cutting-edge health care services they provide.”

The annual rankings rate hospitals in 17 subspecialties. In 12 of the 17 subspecialties, rankings are based on three equally rated criteria: reputation, death rate, and care-related factors such as nursing and patient services. The others are ranked based on reputation, as recommended by three percent or more of board-certified physicians who responded to U.S. News surveys in 2003, 2004 and 2005.

All 6,007 U.S. hospitals were evaluated. Of those, only 176 hospitals scored high enough this year to rank in even a single specialty. Most of the hospitals in the rankings are referral centers, because their physicians see sicker patients and do greater numbers of tough procedures, U.S. News reported. “They follow, and often pioneer, advanced treatment guidelines. They conduct bench-to-bedside research. And they exploit advances in imaging, surgical devices and other technologies,” according to guidelines released by the magazine on its methodology for the rankings.

UAB programs ranked include: Cancer, ranked 22nd; Ear, Nose and Throat, ranked 29th; Geriatrics, ranked 27th; Gynecology, ranked 15th; Heart and Heart Surgery, ranked 10th; Kidney Disease, ranked 15th; Neurology and Neurosurgery, ranked 35th; Orthopedics, ranked 34th, and Rheumatology, ranked sixth. Cardiology has been ranked for the past 10 years and gynecology for seven years. This is the 16th year that U.S. News has published its “America’s Best Hospitals” issue.
UAB Hospital Wins Consumer Choice Award

UAB’s Hospital (UAB) has again been named one of the nation’s top hospitals in the 2005/2006 Consumer Choice Awards by the National Research Corporation (NRC). The award identifies hospitals that health care consumers have chosen as having the highest quality and image in 180 markets throughout the United States.

Winners are determined by multiple quality and image ratings collected by the annual NRC Healthcare Market Guide® study. Of the 3,000 hospitals named by consumers in the study, the winning facilities rank highest in their Metropolitan Statistical Areas. The 2005/2006 NRC HealthCare Market Guide study surveyed over 200,000 households representing 400,000 consumers in the United States.

According to the National Research Corporation, the 2005/2006 Healthcare Market Guide® is the nation’s largest and most comprehensive study of its kind.

UAB Hires Record Number of Nurses to Staff North Pavilion

UAB just made hiring history by bringing on board 128 new registered nurses to help fill vacancies created by the opening of the North Pavilion. All the new hires are recent graduates.

“In a time and era of widespread nursing vacancies in the industry, the human resource department and others working closely with them here at UAB have triumphed over this obstacle to ensure quality health care and perpetuate the organization’s standards of excellence,” said Executive Director Reba Belcher (Human Resource Management, UAB Health System).

Recruitment was a collaborative effort, said HRM Coordinator Michael Gaither (Hospital Human Resources). Coordinator of Nursing Resources Terri Johnson, the nurse ombudsman, visited many nursing schools in the region, as did nurse managers.

There were so many new nurses in orientation this past week that it had to be held in Margaret Cameron Spain auditorium, Gaither said.

The new hires spread out all over the hospital, with the greatest concentration in the nursing internship program, which allows nurses to rotate in 4-week blocks between acute care, critical care, psychiatric and women’s services departments. “A lot of the nursing schools aren’t afforded the opportunity to work at a place like UAB,” said Nurse Manager Kathleen Kniphfer (Resource Management Systems).

“There’s not as much specialization in other hospitals, and this gives them the opportunity to be exposed to different illnesses and techniques in patient care. “A lot of the interns come in thinking they want one thing and end up working somewhere else totally,” she continued. “We have a good retention rate from this.”

The new hires are graduates of UAB, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, the University of South Carolina, and elsewhere.

“This will provide tremendous success in the hospitals’ mission and impact a national nursing shortage,” Gaither said.

Managed Care Contracting Staff Directory

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