Robert R. Rich, MD, former executive associate dean for research and strategic initiatives at Emory University School of Medicine, is the new UAB vice president and dean of the school of medicine, announced UAB President Carol Z. Garrison, PhD. Rich's appointment was effective October 1.

“Dr. Rich brings a history of taking strong research enterprises and enabling them to become elite programs,” Dr. Garrison said. “He is a noted researcher, having been a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator, an outstanding clinician, and an accomplished instructor.

“The search committee, headed by Max Cooper, MD, and James McClintock, PhD, has been tireless in its efforts to bring to UAB the person best able to guide our medical efforts for the future,” she said.

Dr. Rich joined Emory in 1998. He was responsible for clinical and basic science research programs at the medical school and guided the unfolding of the school's new strategic plan for research. During his tenure, the school of medicine’s research funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has increased dramatically. For fiscal year 2003, Emory received more than $158 million from NIH, nearly double the amount when Rich arrived. UAB received more than $208 million in FY 2003.

Prior to joining Emory, Dr. Rich spent 25 years at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, where he rose through the ranks to become vice president and dean of research. The author of more than 200 scientific writings, Dr. Rich's research has focused on the biology and genetics of T-cell function, particularly on interactions between antigens and major histocompatibility complex molecules.

Dr. Rich received a bachelor's of arts magna cum laude from Oberlin College and his medical degree in his home state of Kansas, from University of Kansas Medical School. He completed graduate medical training at the University of Washington, clinical and research fellowships at NIH, and a clinical fellowship in allergy and immunology at Harvard Medical School. Joining the Baylor faculty in 1973, he held a number of administrative and leadership positions.

In addition, Dr. Rich has served as a science policy advisor to the NIH and the Association of American Medical Colleges. He has served on the boards of directors of the American Board of Allergy and Immunology (past chairman), the American Board of Internal Medicine and most recently, was appointed to the board of directors of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology. He chaired the National Research Committee of the Arthritis Foundation and the Research Programs Advisory Committee of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. He is past-president of the Clinical Immunology Society.

Dr. Rich follows William B. Deal, MD, who has served as dean of medicine at UAB since 1997 and announced his plans last year to return to the faculty when a successor was named.

Robert Rich Named UAB VP and Dean, School of Medicine

Robert R. Rich, MD

David Hoidal, CEO

State Approves New UAB Facility

The UAB Health System has received approval from the State Health Planning and Development Agency to move forward with construction of its new women and infants facility. The building originally was a joint venture between UAB and Children’s Health System, but Children’s decided not to take part in the project.

“Now that we have opened the new University Hospital, we are able to direct our energies to updating and replacing our facilities in which we provide care for women and infants,” said David Hoidal, CEO of the UAB Health System. “We are still in the planning process for the facility but it will house UAB’s obstetrical/gynecological services and its regional neonatal intensive care unit.”

UAB has acquired two of the properties necessary for the building, which will be located on the block bounded by 5th and 6th Avenues South and 17th and 18th Streets. Offers have been made on the remaining properties to be acquired for the project.
New Pancreatic Cancer Therapies
Surgical-oncology Lab Fosters Translational Research, Educates Surgeon-scientists

Predicting Resistance, Response
Working at the cellular level, Drs. Arnoletti, Kraus, and Buchsbaum are investigating molecules expressed by tumor cells that may interfere with the effects of EGF-R inhibitors and confer resistance.

"We are looking at various endpoints, including tumor cell proliferation and expression of different markers of cell death," Dr. Arnoletti says. "Our ultimate goal is to fully understand the resistance and response mechanisms in multagent treatment modalities that include EGF-R inhibitors. We'd like to use this knowledge to identify drug-specific molecular targets that may function as in vivo response predictors and enhance conventional chemotherapy and radiation treatment."

There are several potential strategies for predicting response and resistance, Dr. Arnoletti says. "One method is testing for expression of certain genes or molecules in tumor biopsies or, if these are germline mutations, in blood samples." Dr. Arnoletti also is working with Dr. Buchsbaum to test patient tumor cells for individual sensitivity to different drugs.

Phase I clinical trial developed by radiation-oncologist Suzanne Russo, MD, medical oncologist Muhammad Saif, MD, Dr. Buchsbaum, and Dr. Vickers will complement Dr. Arnoletti's basic research. "Previous trials looking at EGF-R inhibitors alone have not shown good efficacy, but when combined with other therapies, they seem to have a synergistic effect. This trial tests the effectiveness of combination treatment with cetuximab, gemcitabine, and radiation in patients with pancreatic cancer."

Education and Experience
A multidisciplinary approach is now the norm for all oncological investigation and treatment, Dr. Arnoletti says, and this dynamic is reflected in the surgical-oncology lab's triple mission -- excellence in clinical practice, basic science research, and resident and medical student education. "Early exposure is the best way to interest residents and students in becoming surgeon-scientists. The lab lets them explore the challenge of translational research while providing hands-on experience and problem-solving skills."

Currently, the lab supports one resident and will have slots for two in 2005. "We also have opportunities for medical students and interested undergraduates," Dr. Arnoletti says. "Students participate in short-term basic and clinical projects during the summer and produce a paper or presentation." Contact Dr. Arnoletti at pablo.arnoletti@ccc.uab.edu for more information.

John W. Kirklin Foundation Research and Education Fellowship Award
Dr. Arnoletti began the multidisciplinary surgical-oncology lab in 2003. Last January, he won the John W. Kirklin, MD, Foundation Research and Education Fellowship Award, sponsored by the Department of Surgery and the School of Medicine at UAB to encourage young faculty members with special interests in academic surgery.

"We are using Kirklin award funds to purchase reagents and supplies and add staff. This fall, Andrei Frolov, PhD, a molecular biologist interested in gene expression in gastrointestinal cancers, will join the lab," Dr. Arnoletti says.

"Dr. Frolov and I have collaborated doing gene expression analysis in Gleevec-treated gastrointestinal stromal tumors and are planning to incorporate that expertise into the development of new treatments for pancreatic cancers."

UAB and Carraway Form Partnership
UAB Health System and Carraway Methodist Health Systems have joined to provide enhanced office-based gynecological services and hospital care, which began Nov. 15. Designed for ease of access with free on-site parking, the office is located on the Carraway campus, in the Carraway Medical Foundation building, easily accessible from all major roads in the Birmingham area. Office hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

“We are excited about the opportunity to bring enhanced gynecological services to the women in our community,” Carraway CEO Tom Litz said. “This agreement between Carraway and UAB assures that women will receive high-quality health care in a compassionate and convenient environment.”

An all-women team of three UAB faculty physicians will see patients and provide care. Services to be provided in the clinic include routine and advanced gynecology care, mammograms, dexam bone scans and routine obstetrical care. Surgical and medical procedures will be performed at Carraway, with deliveries performed at UAB Hospital.

“This is a very good opportunity for UAB to continue its education mission by helping to train residents at Carraway Methodist, while at the same time, partnering with Carraway in its desire to provide the highest quality care possible to the women in the community,” said Chair John Hauth, MD, (Obstetrics and Gynecology).

“This truly is an opportunity where this partnership will enhance the services to the northern Jefferson and surrounding counties that Carraway has faithfully served for many decades.”

With 85 years of commitment to medical education, Carraway now offers residency programs in general surgery, family and internal medicine, and transitional care. More than 1,100 physicians have received training at Carraway.
UAB Opens New Hospital

The facility creates a comfortable environment for patients and their families. All 96 patient rooms are private and feature custom-built furniture, a sofa bed for visitors and windows. The facility also will include 94 private intensive care beds. A wireless call system allows patients direct access to nursing staff; all rooms are equipped with bedside computers that allow clinicians quick and easy access to patient data. A healing garden on the fifth floor allows visitors a quiet place to rest, surrounded by plants and flowers.

“The University Hospital north pavilion represents a new era in health care for Alabama residents,” said UAB President Carol Z. Garrison, PhD. “This facility, with its highly advanced technology, places UAB alongside the finest hospitals in the nation.”

“We have worked diligently during the last 10 years to determine how best to provide patient care that is of the highest quality, while at the same time taking into account the environment of the facility for patients, visitors and the people providing patient care,” said David Hoidal, chief executive officer of UAB Health System. “In the new University Hospital, we believe we have not only created a facility to handle the technology of the future, but also a healthcare setting for the future.”

Michael R. Waldrum, MD, MS, has been named Chief Operating Officer for University Hospital. David Hoidal, Chief Executive Officer of the UAB Health System, made the announcement today. In this position, he will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the hospital and report directly to Hoidal. The appointment was effective December 1, 2004.

“Dr. Waldrum brings to this position the perspective of a physician, as well as an administrator,” Hoidal said. “He fully understands the operational issues for a facility the size of University Hospital.”

Waldrum has overseen information services for the UAB Health System since 1997, being named chief information officer in 1999. An associate professor in pulmonary/critical care, Waldrum earned his medical degree at UAB in 1989. He completed residency training in internal medical at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. He then completed a fellowship in pulmonary/critical care at UAB. He also earned a Master of Science degree from the Harvard School of Public Health.

Active in many professional and scientific societies, he is a member of the College of Healthcare Information Management Executives, the American College of Physician Executives, the Health Information and Management Systems Society and the American Thoracic Society. He also is a graduate of the Global Leadership in Healthcare Program at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business.

Under Waldrum’s leadership, the UAB Health System has been named one of the 100 Most Wired Hospitals or Health Systems for five of six years by Hospitals and Health Networks Magazine.
Happy Holidays
from the
Managed Care Contracting
Staff

Thank you for continuing to choose UAB Health System as a provider partner in your health care network. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you and your health plan members.

The holidays are a time to take stock. As you can see in this newsletter, 2004 is a year of "new" for the Health System. We have a new Dean, Dr. Robert Rich, a new Health System CEO, David Hoidal, a new Hospital COO, Dr. Mike Waldrum, and a new Hospital, the 885,000 square foot North Pavilion.

And in the midst of it all, there are "new" pancreatic cancer therapies being developed by four UAB physicians and scientists. This multi-disciplinary approach is the "old" key to UAB's success in continually providing new patient care modalities. Pancreatic cancer care is one of many advances underway at UAB.

We wish for your happiness during the holidays and your success in 2005.

J.C. Herring, Director

Fast Facts about the New University Hospital

Did you know ...

- The new University Hospital has 12 levels, including a basement and helipad.
- The hospital has a total of 885,000 square feet.
- You could build a 4-foot-wide sidewalk from Birmingham to Mobile with the amount of concrete used to build the facility.
- With the addition of the new hospital building, the UAB core hospital complex includes six city blocks and 14 major buildings. The entire UAB campus now encompasses 83 city blocks.
- There are 15 guest elevators and 5 service elevators for items such as deliveries, laundry, food delivery and sterile supplies.
- All patient rooms are private, including those in the intensive care units.
- There are more than 900 seats throughout the building for families and visitors.
- More than 30,000 pieces of new equipment and furnishings outfit the new building.
- There are approximately 2,000 rooms in the new hospital.
- There is no fourth floor.
- The hospital allows flexibility for future growth and change.
- The hospital has 8 connecting bridges.
- There is accessible parking and direct bridge connections into clinical facilities. The parking deck has room for approximately 1,200 cars.
- An extended-stay hotel, featuring more than 200 suites, will connect to the new parking deck and hospital. The hotel is expected to be completed in May 2005.
- An average floor in the hospital is roughly 105,000 square feet; approximately equivalent to fifty 2,000-square-foot houses.
- There is enough steel to build 2,300 automobiles.
- The emergency department is about the size of a football field.

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