Maria Alonso Spotlight International Medicine

ACCESS TO MEDICAL INTERPRETERS IN 160 LANGUAGES

When the editors of *Birmingham Magazine* began their search for individuals who exemplify the *Southern work ethic*, their first feature (January 2005) highlighted UAB International Medical Service (IMS) Manager Maria Alonso. Born in Cuba and the wife of surgeon and University Hospital Assistant Chief of Staff Jorge Alonso, MD, Maria emigrated to Miami at age 10, just months before the Cuban missile crisis. It was 3 years before the Mexican government helped her father, a physician, and her mother obtain visas to join her.

“Those were tough times,” she recalls. “Relatives placed me in school and, at first, I would constantly be asking people ‘What are you trying to say to me?’ It was upsetting and frustrating to be in a strange place where I didn’t know the language.”

COMMUNICATION COMES FIRST

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) standard RI.1.3.6 calls for all hospitals to “demonstrate respect for each patient’s communication needs,” as part of the overall patient rights standards.

“It is critical to use only qualified medical interpreters when communicating with non-English speaking patients,” explains Alonso, who joined UAB in 1993.

IMS interpreters, whether staff or contract employees, have special training in medical terminology, consecutive interpreting, and cultural nuances, all of which are imperative to achieve effective communication among speakers of different languages. A telephone “language line” can quickly help UAB interpreters and patients when a UAB staff member speaking the language cannot immediately be found.

Alonso emphasizes that IMS staff interpreters are recognized by the State of Alabama as “Certified Medical Interpreters” and are among very few in Alabama with this official recognition. She adds, “Overall, the need for translators continues to grow.”

To request the assistance of a medical interpreter, call 934-2096 or page the interpreter on call, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, through UAB paging at 934-3411.

Internet Marketing

MARKETING THE UAB HEALTH SYSTEM 2005

More than 2 million visitors logged on to the UAB Health System (UABHS) Web site in 2004. “The majority comes to our site to find a doctor or to research health information, which is why a good
UAB Faculty Among Top 15 In Mercedes Marathon

Pediatric urologist Tony Herndon, MD, epidemiologist Gerald McGwin, PhD, and his running partner, pulmonologist John Kennedy, MD, were among the top 15 finishers in Birmingham’s February Mercedes Marathon.

Of 674 runners who completed the marathon that wound through the streets of Birmingham, Homewood, and Mountain Brook, Dr. Herndon came in fourth, covering the 26.2 miles in 2 hours and 38 minutes. Dr. McGwin finished in 2 hours and 53 minutes, placing him 10th. Dr. Kennedy won the grand master’s division, coming in first among runners 50 years and older, and finishing 15th overall with a time of 3 hours and 3 minutes.

Dr. Herndon’s last race before the Mercedes Marathon was the grueling Pikes Peak Marathon. Runners begin at 6,235 feet, climb 13.4 miles to 14,110 feet, and then head back down. “The high altitude made it the hardest race I’ve ever run,” says Dr. Herndon, who has been running for 20 years. “I finished in about 5 hours — twice my time in the Mercedes.” Dr. Herndon will forgo another marathon this year if he secures a place in an even more challenging event, the Ironman Triathlon World Championship, a 2.4-mile ocean swim, 112-mile bike race, and 26.2-mile run held in October in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii.

The Birmingham event was the first of 4 marathons Dr. Kennedy plans to run this year, and he hopes to finish one of those races in 3 hours or less. Dr. McGwin will complete 4 to 6 marathons in 2005. Both men will be among the 20,000 runners competing in the Boston Marathon on April 18.

Drs. McGwin and Kennedy frequently train together. “We ran the Mercedes as a training run. Although many see a marathon as something you recover from for weeks, I ran 100 miles the week before and 100 miles the week afterwards. John also jumped right back into training,” says Dr. McGwin, who hopes to run the Boston Marathon in 2 hours, 50 minutes or faster.

This year, Dr. Kennedy hopes to break the 3-hour mark. He says the most enjoyable aspect of running is training with friends and credits Dr. McGwin as a tremendous training partner, helping him improve times and lengthen distances.

Reynolds Historical Lecture

“Healing the Nation: Soldiers and the Culture of Caregiving in Britain During the Great War” will be presented by Jeffrey Reznick, PhD, executive director and senior research fellow of the Orthotic & Prosthetic Assistant Fund on May 3 at noon at the Reynolds Historical Library in the Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences.

King Joins Gastroenterology & Hepatology

UAB Professor and Director of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology Mel Wilcox, MD, announces the recent appointment of Steven J. King, MD, as assistant professor.

Dr. King completed both a BS degree and PhD degree at Washington State University in Pullman. He came to UAB as a research fellow in the Hypertension Research Program and was assistant professor from 1988 to 1992. He completed his MD degree at the School of Medicine at UAB in 1995, and subsequently, he served an internal medicine and pediatrics internship and residency at UAB and Children’s Hospital. He completed a fellowship in pediatric gastroenterology and transplant hepatology in June 2004. He is certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American Board of Pediatrics.

In addition to numerous peer-reviewed publications, abstracts, and teaching experiences, Dr. King was honored with the 1995 Paul Palmisano Excellence in Pediatrics and the 1996 Argus Society Award for Instructional Excellence at UAB.
Dr. King’s clinical interests center on pulmonary complications of liver disease, and his current research focuses on pulmonary complications of liver disease and cystic fibrosis.

He may be reached at 975-5676 or 996-2089 for academic and administrative calls; e-mail sjking@uab.edu. Call 801-7726 for patient appointments.

**TAXONOMY IMPROVES NAVIGATION**

The UABHS Web, which currently hosts more than 9,000 pages, is managed by a content management system developed by UAB that allows multiple approved authors to contribute to and maintain the site. Currently, more than 80 authors contribute. In 2004, Marketing Communications worked with the Health System Medical Publications office to develop a taxonomy that ties the Web pages together.

“The new taxonomy allows authors to tag each page with key words so that when a visitor opens a page on a particular topic, links to related information, including UAB physician specialists, clinical services, disease-specific information, published articles, clinical trials, and events appear automatically in the left sidebar,” says Susan Reid, marketing manager in the Department of Marketing Communications, who manages the site. In addition to taxonomy development, a new design was launched last November for the UABHS consumer and referring physician sites. Research on visitor navigation patterns drove the consumer site design, and referring physician focus group research drove the physician site design. The department also worked on optimizing search engine recognition of the sites, which has doubled the number of visits each month.

**CREATING INTERACTIVITY**

While attracting visitors to the site is a major strategic objective, creating interactivity is critical,” Debbie Hunter-Snow, director of Marketing Communications, says.

**SERVICE OF GRATITUDE**

School of Medicine students paid their last respects to individuals who donated their bodies to scientific study at a recent memorial service for the Anatomical Donor program in Margaret Cameron Spain Auditorium. The service was hosted by the members of the freshman class.

“Donors are an integral part of our medical education, serving, in effect, as our first ‘patients,’” says organizer James Robinson, a first-year medical student.

“The Class of 2008 wished to convey our gratitude to the sacrifice that they and their families have made for the betterment of our medical education.”

More than 150 family members and relatives of the donors attended the service, along with School of Medicine students and faculty.

The UAB Anatomical Donor Program receives about 100 cadavers each year for study at the medical school. For more information on the program, call 205-934-4494.
activity is another important marketing goal. Interactivity is achieved through subscriptions to e-newsletters on cancer, heart disease, women’s health, men’s health, and general health issues. Currently, more than 3,000 individuals have signed up for these newsletters to keep current on new treatments and services UABHS provides. The department sends out over 9,000 e-newsletters each month.

**DEPARTMENTAL SITES**

“There are many benefits to hosting your Web site through the UABHS content management system,” Hunter-Snow says. “Being part of the same taxonomy system automatically links your site to other UAB-related pages, increasing its visibility and access.” The photo archive provides access to hundreds of photographs that can be used in building the site. Marketing Communications works with faculty and staff who wish to launch their own sites by helping them with site architecture; UAB provides a 2-hour class on authoring through the content management system. For more information on UAB Health System consumer or physician Web sites, contact Susan Reid at 934-7848, or e-mail sreid@uabmc.edu.

**NICH MARKETS AND LIVE WEBCASTS**

During 2005, Marketing Communications will continue developing new Internet sites for key service lines and niche services unique to UAB. To spotlight the new surgical facilities, live Web casts are being promoted to physicians nationally and later archived on the UABHS Web site. The referring physician’s Web site, managed by Medical Publications, has launched an e-newsletter for physicians who want to learn more about the live Web casts and about new UABHS physicians and services.