Grant Funds New Faculty, 64-slice CT Scanner

STATE-OF-THE ART CARDIAC IMAGING WILL IMPROVE PATIENT CARE, ADD NEW JOBS TO ALABAMA ECONOMY

A strong collaboration between UAB’s Division of Cardiovascular Disease and Department of Radiology is advancing development of computed tomographic (CT) imaging techniques, says Robert C. Bourge, MD, professor and director of the Division of Cardiovascular Disease. A $1.5 million state economic development grant will soon accelerate that growth, bringing a 64-slice CT scanner and two new specialists — a cardiologist and a radiologist with expertise in high-resolution cardiovascular imaging — to UAB.

“Imaging plays an increasingly important role in evaluation and treatment of heart and blood vessel diseases,” Dr. Bourge explains. “Current imaging modalities that are largely noninvasive, such as nuclear cardiology studies, echocardiography, MRI, and CT, all provide information about the heart’s structure in both acquired cardiovascular disease and congenital heart disease. Imaging also guides many interventional procedures, showing physicians where to place stents, balloons, and cardiac resynchronization devices. UAB is a world leader in cardiac MRI and MRA, which gives physicians excellent high-resolution 3D images of the heart, but an increasing number of patients have implanted electronic devices that preclude magnetic-based imaging.”

MORE PATIENTS WILL BENEFIT

CT imaging of the heart is currently limited by the speed at which images are obtained, Robert E. Koehler, MD, professor and Witten-Stanley Endowed Chair of Radiology, explains. “Many patients with high-normal to elevated heart rates cannot be adequately studied with current equipment. The 64-slice scanners, however, image chest volume quickly enough to obtain ‘stop-action’ pictures of a heart beating at 80, 90, or 100 beats a minute. The technology also includes newly developed software that creates 3-D reconstructions of acquired slices — images are displayed in anatomic form rather than as a series of slices.”
“In some cases, advanced imaging will allow physicians to make clinical judgments more rapidly,” he continues. “For example, a patient presenting in the Emergency Department with chest pain may be experiencing a coronary event, stomach reflux, or some other noncardiac cause of chest pain. Currently, patients may undergo cardiac catheterization if the level of concern is significant.

“When high-resolution cardiac CT is available, many patients with noncardiac chest pain may be able to avoid the risks and expense of cardiac catheterization.”

EXPANDING APPLICATIONS

High-resolution imaging could facilitate CT angiography, Dr. Bourge says. “The 64-slice scanner also will advance experimental studies. I’m interested in its utility in assessing coronary anatomy and developing technologies for true molecular imaging, combining cardiovascular CT with radiopharmaceutical tags that may allow for functional imaging.”

Drs. Bourge and Koehler expect the 64-slice scanner to be installed this summer. It will be housed in the Department of Radiology next to the planned Heart and Vascular Center on the sixth floor of the new University Hospital.

UAB Chief Planning and Strategy Officer Martin Nowak, who organized pursuit of the grant, praises the collaboration that brought together the Department of Radiology, the Division of Cardiovascular Disease, and the State of Alabama.

“By enabling cutting-edge research in cardiac imaging, enhancing patient care, and fueling statewide economic development, this concerted effort brings many benefits to UAB and the citizens of Alabama.”

Recruitment efforts are under way for eminent clinician-scientists to help open new areas of research and patient care, but both Drs. Bourge and Koehler emphasize UAB’s existing cardiology and radiology faculty have considerable expertise in cardiac imaging.

“Radiologists Satinder Singh and Hrudaya Nath and cardiologists Steve Lloyd, Himanshu Gupta, and Ami Iskandrian will be instrumental in jump-starting our efforts,” Dr. Bourge says. “Advanced imaging technologies and additional specialists will improve clinical services and allow a concentrated effort in cardiovascular imaging, enhancing our ability to compete for federal and industry grants.”

“UAB’s robust partnership between cardiology and radiology is unusual in academic medical centers and helps power our efforts in cardiac imaging,” Dr. Koehler says. “By developing this initiative together, we offer our patients comprehensive expertise. The State of Alabama Development grant will allow UAB to move to the forefront of this growing field of medicine, improving care and bringing a new line of employment to University Hospital and the Birmingham area. This will include not only the physician-specialists we hope to recruit, but also scientists, technologists, research technicians, and other support personnel, as well as extramural research funding.”

After being in private practice for 3 years, Dr. Peters completed a pediatric emergency medicine fellowship at Children’s Hospital of The King’s Daughters in Norfolk, Virginia, and has additional training in forensic pediatrics.

Dr. Peters’ clinical interests center on child abuse and neglect, and she will be working to develop and expand child maltreatment services at Children’s Hospital. Her current research focuses on the physical abuse of children.

Dr. Peters may be reached at 939-6040 for academic and administrative calls; e-mail mpeters@peds.uab.edu.

Active Staff

Jennie Andresen, MD, 934-4531, MTC 201, General Pediatrics, Effective March
Gregory C. Batson, MD, 934-6103, WEBB 241, Clinical Nutrition, Effective February
Michael J. Hanaway, MD, 934-2131, LHRB 728, Transplant Surgery, Effective February
Richard A. S. Reid, MD, 934-2918, FOT 1060, Neurosurgery, Effective February
W. Frank Tenney, MD, 939-9781, ACC 516, Pediatric Nephrology, Effective February

Peters Joins Pediatric Emergency Medicine

UAB Professor and Chair of the Department of Pediatrics Sergio Stagno, MD, and Peter W. Glaesser, MD, professor and director of Pediatric Emergency Medicine, announce the appointment of Melissa L. Peters, MD, as assistant professor.

An honors graduate of Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, Dr. Peters completed her MD degree at Temple University School of Medicine in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, followed by a pediatrics residency at Vanderbilt Children’s Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. She is board certified in pediatrics.
ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

DeLisa A. West, PhD, 934-3454, SRC 530, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Effective February

UAB’s CME Study Receives International Attention
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Specifically, lead author of the UAB study, Linda Casebeer, PhD, says, “Overall mean knowledge scores increased from 58.1% to 75.6% at post-test and then decreased to 68.2% at 4 weeks following the course.” Almost all doctors reported changing their practices as a result of the courses. Others participating in the UAB study included Robert E. Kristofco, S. Strasser, M. Reilly, P. Krishnamoorthy, A. Rabin, S. Zheng, S. Karp, and L. Myers.

ACCOLADES

UAB Assistant Professor Olaf Kutsch, PhD, recently received a 2004 Drug Discovery and Development Research Grant from GlaxoSmithKline. He and co-winners from the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center and the Weill Medical College of Cornell University will split the $250,000 prize. All are working on novel weapons in the fight against AIDS.

Dr. Kutsch’s project involves a new method for screening compounds with the potential to inhibit HIV replication. Specifically, of his novel, high throughput screening system, he says: “For the first time, our system allows us to screen for HIV-1 Tat inhibitors with the capacity to immediately block HIV-1 expression. This capacity is considered essential for a transcription inhibitor to be effective in the clinical setting.”

Winners were selected by an Expert Review Board, including UAB Professor of Medicine Michael Saag, MD, John Bartlett, MD, from Duke University Medical Center, and David Ho, MD, Rockefeller University, and scientific director of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center.

HIPAA Privacy & Security Training

HIPAA (Health Information Portability and Accountability Act) privacy and security training are now available on the revised HIPAA Web site for faculty, staff, and students at UAB and the UAB Health System (UABHS). The Web site, www.hipaa.uab.edu, provides information about how HIPAA impacts UAB and UABHS. The Web site, www.hipaa.uab.edu, provides information about how HIPAA impacts UAB and UABHS. Program information, frequently asked questions, contact information, and a link to complete training are on the site.

The site operates through a mechanism called WebCT that allows tracking and electronic storage of employees’ and students’ HIPAA training records. Individuals will use their Blazer ID to log onto WebCT. All faculty, staff, and students in the following schools need to complete HIPAA security training by April 20: Dentistry, Health Related Professions, Medicine, Nursing, and Optometry, as well as all UAB Health System employees.

Employees and students who have already completed HIPAA privacy training do not need to repeat it. All employees and students in the Health System and schools cited above must complete the new training requirement, HIPAA Basic Security, by April 20. Group sessions will be offered at Margaret Cameron Spain Auditorium.

Users also can access the site by clicking on the UAB home page’s HIPAA tab in the bottom right corner. For questions regarding HIPAA or the training requirement, call the UAB/UABHS HIPAA program office at 996-2644.

DIETARY SUPPLEMENT DATABASE

The National Institutes of Health’s Office of Dietary Supplements has launched an improved International Bibliographic Information on Dietary Supplements (IBIDS) database. The new site contains more than 730,000 citations on the topic. Citations are available from 1986 to the present, and abstracts are included when the publisher grants permission. Dietary supplement fact sheets also are available on the site.


To access a Synopsis article from the last 2 years, visit our Web site at www.health.uab.edu/synopsis. You can search by date or subject in the left sidebar.

UAB physicians: visit MSI, the password-protected Medical Staff intranet site, at https://horizon.hs.uab.edu.
Cancer Center Supporters Celebrate 2005 Gala

The UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center Supporters marked 20 years of fundraising success with Gala 2005, a festive evening on February 26, celebrating this year’s record-breaking campaign. In 2005, these dedicated volunteers raised more than $669,000 — their highest total ever — for the center’s Neuro-oncology Program and high-priority patient/family services. One-quarter of the money raised will support compassionate amenities for all patients, as well as affordable lodging, prescription drugs, transportation, and financial assistance for patients in need.

The formal Gala, a tradition of the Birmingham winter season, is the Supporters’ way of saying “thank you” to the community. All money raised stays in Birmingham for the center’s research programs and patient/family services.

The theme for Gala 2005 was “Bubbles” — with a retro twist. Guests entered through doorways flanked by bubbles and were greeted by servers offering flutes of champagne. Creative lighting turned the The Kirklin Clinic® into an extravaganza with decorations coordinated by Wildflower Designs.

GLIOMA INVASION CORE FACILITY

The major portion of funds raised will go toward establishing a Glioma Invasion Core Facility. Gliomas are extremely difficult to treat, and the new laboratory will help researchers determine the basic biology of these tumors.

The Neuro-oncology Program is already recognized as a national leader in the field of brain tumor research, having received 1 of the first 2 brain tumor SPORE (Specialized Program of Research Excellence) grants from the National Cancer Institute.

Over the years, the Supporters have raised nearly $7 million for the Cancer Center, the only such center in a five-state area that meets the stringent criteria for NCI’s “comprehensive” designation.

These funds have provided equipment for establishing research laboratories, cutting-edge instruments for innovative research and treatment, and recruitment packages for attracting superb faculty members, as well as important services for compassionate care.

ACCOLADES

Dale J. Benos, PhD, professor and chair of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics, has been elected president of the American Physiological Society (APS). He will be installed in office at the organization’s annual meeting in July in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

APS, headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, is a nonprofit professional organization that exists to foster education, scientific research, and dissemination of information in the physiological sciences. The society’s 10,000-plus members represent physiology, medicine, and other health-related fields.