The University of Alabama Health Services Foundation (UAHSF) and its General Endowment Fund (GEF) Committee recently awarded $2.6 million in research grants for the 2005 calendar year. Grants fund research in four categories: clinical care initiatives, medical education initiatives, laboratory research initiatives, and patient research initiatives. The awards enable university-wide projects benefitting UAHSF and the School of Medicine.

Additionally, $800,000 was allocated to the Scholar’s Award Program to attract distinguished scientists and clinicians and bring unusual potential or accomplishments to School of Medicine research. This year, the Scholars Award Program is offering eight $100,000 awards to enhance already established recruitment packages for exceptional faculty considering UAB.

CLINICAL CARE INITIATIVES ($557,333)
- Ken Waites, MD, pathology, “Epidemiology, Transmission, and Virulence of Staphylococcus,” $253,541
- Erica Liebelt, MD, emergency medicine, “Building the UAB Medical Toxicology Treatment Center of Excellence,” $175,000
- Keith Wille, MD, medicine, “UAB-UAHSF Pulmonary Thromboendarterectomy Clinic,” $128,792

MEDICAL EDUCATION INITIATIVES ($331,350)
- Mary Hawn, MD, surgery, “Development of a Surgical Skills Curriculum and Simulation Training for Medical Education,” $198,850

LABORATORY RESEARCH INITIATIVES ($789,100)
- Bob Kesterson, PhD, genetics, “Enrichment of Transgenic Animal/Embryonic Stem Cell Resource,” $39,100
- Michael Friedlander, PhD, neurobiology, “Acquisition of a 3T fMRI Head-only Unit for Dedicated Brain Research,” $500,000
- Lawrence DeLucas, OD, PhD, optometry, “Membrane Protein Structural Studies,” $100,000
- Janet Yother, PhD, microbiology, “Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry Shared Facility for Carbohydrate Research,” $150,000

PATIENT RESEARCH INITIATIVES ($754,602)
- Lawrence Lamb, MD, medicine, “Laboratory for Cellular and Tissue Engineering,” $257,000
- Stephen Moser, PhD, pathology, “Real-time Polymerase Chain Reaction for the Early Diagnosis of Invasive Fungal Infections,” $148,602
- Patrick Ramsey, PhD, Ob/Gyn, “Development of a Computerized Women’s Health Data/Specimen Biorepository,” $180,000
- Robert Gaston, PhD, medicine, “Clinical Trials Center in Abdominal Organ Transplantation,” $169,000

Medical Historians Converge On Birmingham

Birmingham will host the 78th annual meeting of the American Association for the History of Medicine on April 7-10. Local arrangements committee co-chairs Michael Flannery, UAB associate director for historical collections, and Tim Pennycuff, university archivist, expect more than 400 historians, health professionals, librarians and archivists in the history of the health sciences, and students at the downtown Sheraton Conference Center.
eral Endowment Fund (GEF) to enhance the infrastructure of the academic health center’s patient-oriented and laboratory research, clinical-care programs, and medical education through a series of annual grants. Since its 1996 inception, GEF has awarded 219 grants, totaling $34.4 million, to UAB faculty. In addition, it has allocated $2.4 million to the Scholar’s Award Program to help attract distinguished scientists and clinicians who bring unusual potential or accomplishments to School of Medicine research efforts.

Last June, UAHSF hosted a celebration of the awards at the Alys Stephens Center. Five outstanding UAB faculty members presented their accomplishments achieved with GEF grants.

- **John Shuster, MD**, Psychiatry, Center for Palliative Care
  “UAB Palliative Medicine Program Research Core”
- **Jay McDonald, MD**, Pathology
  “Center for Metabolic Bone Disease: The Impact of UAHSF/GEF Program”
- **David Allison, PhD**, Biostatistics,
  “Microarray Data Analysis Clearinghouse”
- **Stephen Barnes, PhD**, Pharmacology and Toxicology,
  “Hydrid Quadrupole Orthogonal Time-of-Flight Mass Spectrometer”
- **Mona Fouda, MD, MPH**, Preventive Medicine
  “Recruitment and Retention Shared Facility”

GEF awards reach beyond the United States, encompassing the international community with grants awarded for faculty studies in Zambia and China. For more information about award categories, visit www.uab.edu/uasom/research/docs/2004hsfgef.doc. Chairs of the GEF award review committees include:

- Laboratory Research Initiatives Committee — Richard Marchase, PhD
- Patient Care-oriented Initiatives Committee — Larry Moreland, MD
- Clinical Care Initiatives Committee — H. Hughes Evans, MD
- Medical Education Initiatives Committee — Dennis Boulware, MD

**CMS PHYSICIAN “PAY-FOR-PERFORMANCE” PILOT**

On February 1, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) launched its first physician pay-for-performance pilot program. The agency will provide bonuses to physicians at 10 participating clinics who achieve more efficient and better quality care, the Wall Street Journal reports. The project, which CMS Administrator Mark McClellan called part of an effort to “develop quality measures in virtually all settings of care,” focuses on 32 quality measures for chronic and preventive disease management in the Medicare population, such as vaccination rates among patients at high risk for influenza, blood pressure control for diabetics, and use of cholesterol-lowering medication by patients with heart disease. Other targeted areas are coronary artery disease, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and preventive services, such as breast and colorectal cancer screenings.

Medicare currently reimburses physicians on the number and complexity of patient services. By anticipating patient needs, especially those with chronic diseases, healthcare providers who partner with patients can intervene before expensive procedures and hospitalizations are required. The Physician Group Practice demonstration is designed to encourage these preventive efforts.

Under the program, participating physicians continue to receive payments based on services delivered, but also become eligible for annual bonuses of up to 5% of their overall annual Medicare compensation, “if they reduce the anticipated increase in costs for certain patients.” Meanwhile, the American Medical Association says that while it is “too early” for CMS to restructure physician reimbursements based on quality, “demonstration projects seem to be the right process” for evaluating the pay-for-performance model” (Lueck, Wall Street Journal, 2/1/05). For more information, visit www.cms.hhs.gov/researchers/demos/pgp.asp.

**Girkin Wins Eye Research Award**

Christopher A. Girkin, MD, associate professor in UAB’s Department of Ophthalmology, has received a $55,000 Physician-Scientist Award from Research to Prevent Blindness (RPB). RPB Physician-Scientist awards allow physicians at U.S. medical institutions to devote time to clinical eye research activities, providing greater opportunities for specialized study with direct application to the human condition. Dr. Girkin is 1 of 25 physician-scientists at 17 institutions who have received the award since it was established in 2000.

Dr. Girkin’s research focuses on developing the first three-dimensional digital reconstructions of the human optic nerve head. These unique high-fidelity reconstructions can be used to test whether variations in the architecture of the eye are critical in determining risk of developing glaucoma.
RPB is the world’s leading voluntary organization supporting eye research. To date, the organization has awarded UAB grants totaling more than $2 million. Since it was founded in 1960, RPB has channeled hundreds of millions of dollars to medical institutions nationwide for research into the causes, treatment, and prevention of blinding eye diseases.

CON PROCESS — UPDATE

Cooper Green Hospital submitted a Letter of Intent January 6 to file a Certificate of Need (CON) application to spend an estimated $28 to $34 million to update the existing hospital facility. It stated that no new services will be added. The goal is to bring the facility in compliance with “life safety and other applicable facility regulations.”

Fennell Joins General Internal Medicine

UAB Professor and Medical Director of Prime Care Services and Clinics Nancy E. Dunlap, MD, PhD, announces the appointment of Rick Fennell, MD, as assistant professor.

Prior to graduating from Birmingham-Southern College, Dr. Fennell served as a U.S. Army Medical Corpsman, an emergency medical technician, a critical care registered nurse, and a cardiology assistant. He completed his MD degree at the School of Medicine at UAB and an internal medicine internship and residency at Carraway Methodist Medical Center.

Dr. Fennell’s clinical interests are cardiology, diabetes, and hypertension. He is currently accepting patients at UAB-Hueytown; call 497-4083 for patient appointments; e-mail rfennell@uabmc.edu.

Medical Historians Converge on Birmingham

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will present papers on a variety of topics in the history of the health sciences. Medical historian John Eyler, PhD, from the University of Minnesota, will deliver the annual Garrison Lecture. Named for Fielding Garrison, MD, author of Introduction to the History of Medicine and editor of Index Medicus, the lecture, “De Kruif’s Boast: Vaccine Development and Construction of a Virus,” will be held at the historic Sixteenth Street Baptist Church on Friday evening.

Members of the UAB community are welcome to attend; to register online via a secure Web site, go to www.cme.uab.edu/aahm. For additional information, contact Flannery or Pennycuff at 934-4475 or 934-1896, respectively.

Alexander Named To AMA House Of Delegates

C. Bruce Alexander, MD, UAB professor and vice chair of the Department of Pathology, has been elected by the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP) as the society’s alternate delegate to the American Medical Association House of Delegates, the organization’s principal policy-making body.

Dr. Alexander serves on the ASCP Board of Directors and previously served on the advisory council of this premier pathology organization, which consists of 11,000 pathologists and other physicians and more than 129,000 laboratories. ASCP serves as a national resource for enhancement of the quality of the practice of pathology and laboratory medicine.

GENETICS-RELATED LAW AND POLICY

The National Human Genome Research Institute Policy and Legislation Database covers laws and policies governing genetic testing and counseling, insurance and employment discrimination, newborn screening, and privacy and confidentiality of genetic information. www.genome.gov/Legislative-Database

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.
with human resource issues in complex institutions,” Margison says. “In particular, her experience in working with physicians and administrators in health care and academic medicine will be of great benefit to UAB. She has been a champion of employee reward and recognition programs and committed to a customer-service approach to delivering human resource programs and services. We are pleased to have her joining our leadership team.”

In Massachusetts, Locke led the transformation of the human resources office to better meet the needs of not only the institution, but also of the employees. This process included implementation of a model that illustrates the connection between enhanced employee satisfaction and increased patient satisfaction. Due to her work, there has been a marked increase in employee satisfaction and resulting patient satisfaction increases.

Prior to joining Brigham and Women’s, Locke was senior vice president for human resources at University Medical Center in Jacksonville, Florida. She also served as vice president of human resources for consumer and small business at Bell Atlantic. Locke has worked for American Express Travel Related Services, White Cap, Inc., Harvard Community Health Plan, and Georgetown Community Health Plan.

Locke is a graduate of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. She and her husband, Ron, have two grown children living in Jacksonville, Florida.

Volunteers Wanted

The International Center for Equal Healthcare Access (ICEHA) is recruiting experienced physicians and nurses for 8- to 12-week sessions in developing countries. Currently, 200 short-term volunteer providers are urgently needed for technical assistance in HIV and infectious diseases care. Using clinical mentoring, volunteers provide local healthcare providers with HIV bedside training.

ICEHA’s largest program, and the one most in need of volunteers, is in Cambodia. Worldwide, more than 500,000 HIV patients will be targeted for help.