Sontheimer is Civitian International Research Center Director

UAB’s Harald W. Sontheimer, PhD, is director of UAB’s Civitan International Research Center (CIRC), effective August 1. He takes the center’s reins following the departure of director Michael Friedlander, PhD. Dedicated to the research, treatment, and prevention of mental retardation and developmental disabilities, CIRC was created in 1990 following a pledge to UAB of $20 million in support from the Civitan International Foundation, a worldwide community service organization.

The professor of neurobiology and cell biology has recently garnered media attention for his discovery that sulfa-salazine, a drug currently used to treat intestinal inflammation such as Crohn’s disease, may also treat glioblastoma multiforme. Because the drug is already in existence, this therapy rapidly moved from basic laboratory investigation at UAB to human clinical trials at sites around the United States. Additional clinical trial testing is expected to take place soon through UAB’s Comprehensive Cancer Center’s Brain Tumor Specialized Program of Research Excellence.

In a message to UAB medical faculty, Dr. Sontheimer says, “CIRC will embrace a new thematic initiative directed at laboratory and patient-oriented research in autism and the so-called autistic spectrum disorders. To advance UAB to the forefront of autism studies, CIRC will join with interested departments and centers to recruit leading scientists actively conducting investigations in this area.

“Together with Dr. Alan Percy, UAB professor of pediatric neurology and medical director of the Sparks/Civitan Clinics, we also will work on continued development of a functional magnetic resonance imaging facility for these disorders, which have emerged over the past decade as a public health crisis.”

UAB has long provided quality clinical services to those with developmental

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disabilities through the UAB Sparks/Civitan Clinics,” Dr. Sontheimer continues. “We intend to strengthen these ties to further build on research strength of UAB’s Department of Neurobiology, so CIRC becomes a leader in the struggle to understand and prevent developmental disabilities.”

As Medical Dean Robert Rich, MD, notes in his School of Medicine newsletter, Dr. Sontheimer is a leading world expert on glial cells and their function in health and disease in the developing and mature brain. In addition to Dr. Sontheimer’s development of a novel therapy for humans with the most devastating type of brain cancer, he also is principal investigator for seven active grants with total annual funding of nearly $1.6 million and is cofounder of TransMolecular, Inc., a Birmingham-based biomedical research company, and cochair of its scientific advisory board.

He joined UAB in 1994 as associate scientist in the Neurobiology Research Center after having received his doctorate in neurobiology from the University of Heidelberg, Germany, in 1988 and having served on the Yale University faculty for 5 years. In 2004, the Chesapeake Civitan District Foundation named Dr. Sontheimer the first McNulty Civitan Scientist.

Civitan International, founded in 1920, promotes citizenship by providing a volunteer organization of clubs with an emphasis on helping individuals with developmental disabilities.

Internal Medicine Residency Program Web Site

A content-rich Web site awaits prospective and current UAB internal medicine residents at http://uabim.dom.uab.edu. The prospective resident button provides applicants information about the medical center, program curriculum, faculty, facilities, requirements, the interview process, employment benefits, and life in Birmingham. Prospective residents also can access the Electronic Residency Application Service and the Graduate Medical Education Policies and Procedures Manual.

“The Web site allowed us to move away from paper and brochure format and provide prospective applicants with accurate, timely program information,” UAB Internal Medicine Training Program Director Gustavo Heudebert, MD, says.

“We recently added a password-protected area for current residents and authorized faculty,” he says. The protected site provides access to policies governing the training program, on-call schedules, house staff conferences, curriculum by training year, and internal program matters. With proper access codes, residents can view the restricted site from any Internet connection to check on-call and conference schedules.

Residents also can create their own Web site within the internal medicine portal — either a password-protected or public site,” Dr. Heudebert adds. “In the future, we hope to provide prospective applicants access to view selected sections of the restricted area.”

Christein Joins GI Surgery

John D. Christein, MD, has accepted an appointment as assistant professor of surgery in the section of gastrointestinal surgery. Dr. Christein graduated from Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, and received his medical degree from Rush Medical College in Chicago. He completed residency training at the Rush University/Cook County Hospital Surgical Residency Program, where he served as chief administrative resident and was named chief resident of the year. He subsequently completed an advanced gastrointestinal surgery fellowship at the Mayo Clinic, in Rochester, Minnesota. While at Mayo, he focused mainly on pancreatic and liver resection for both benign and malignant disease.

A diplomat of the American Board of Surgery, he has published on pancreatic and liver disease. His research interests focus on pancreatic malignancy, acute and chronic pancreatitis, pancreatic cystic neoplasms, and malignancy or cystic lesions of the biliary tree. Dr. Christein’s clinical interests include operative therapy for acute and chronic pancreatitis, pancreatic and biliary malignancy, laparoscopic pancreatic cystic neoplasm resection, laparoscopic and open liver resection, and biliary reconstruction after iatrogenic injury.

Dr. Christein is working in collaboration with the Divisions of Transplant Surgery and Gastroenterology, as well as the Pain Clinic, in development of the Human Islet Auto-transplant Program. Patients with severe chronic pancreatitis undergo thorough evaluation and total pancreatectomy with islet cell auto-transplantation. This state-of-the-art...
therapy is only offered at two other centers in the United States, neither of which is in the South. Dr. Christein is accepting patients at The Kirklin Clinic®. He can be reached at 996-4958 or via e-mail at jdc16@uab.edu.

Ritchie Honored continued from page 1

“She started the Palliative Care Consult Program using a case-finding methodology to identify patients who would benefit from palliative care and began offering consultations for any hospital inpatient.”

In 2002, Dr. Ritchie was appointed associate chief of staff at the Louisville VA and asked to form a Geriatrics and Extended Care Service and provide leadership for all subsequent geriatric initiatives at the Louisville VA.

She helped design a continuity-of-care program that assisted providers in selecting appropriate utilization of clinical services and identifying discharge needs at admission to seamlessly transition patients from inpatient to outpatient settings. Additionally, the program featured ongoing quality analysis tools to continuously improve systems of care.

Established in 1996, the Mark Wolcott Award honors Dr. Wolcott, who served as VAH associate chief medical director for clinical affairs and chief of research in surgery and who dedicated more than 40 years to improving health care quality within the VHA.

UAB’s ehealth Captures Publishing Honors

Quarterly consumer health publication ehealth, produced by the UAB Health System Office of Marketing Communications, recently brought home top awards in an annual custom publishing contest.

McMurry, based in Phoenix, Arizona, sponsored the contest. McMurry, one of the leading custom publishers in the United States, publishes magazines and newsletters for more than 100 hospitals across the country, including UAB’s ehealth title.

UAB competed with other McMurry hospital publications and won in multiple categories, including “Best Overall Syndicated Publication,” “Best Publication Integration Into a Web Site,” “Best Integration of Publication with Other Marketing Materials,” and “Most Effective Customization of a Masterbook Article.”

ehealth is delivered to more than 110,000 Alabama residents. It is available in waiting areas at University Hospital and physicians’ offices and is posted on the UAB Health System’s Web site at www.health.uab.edu.

Appointments

ACTIVE STAFF

Tolulope T. Aduroja, MD, 934-5156, SPC 3rd Floor, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Effective July

Michael A. Albert, Jr., MD, 918-0047, EFH 707, Ophthalmology, Effective July

Jeffrey A. Alten, MD, 934-1342, ACC 504, Pediatric Critical Care, Effective July

Christopher M. Anderson, MD, 934-1342, ACC 300, Pediatric Surgery, Effective July


The Standards and Clinical Resources (SCR) Web site now hosts Lab Value Alerts for Medical and Dental Staff, house staff, and head nurses. Found on SCR’s Lab Redbook section, these alerts cover changes in laboratory tests, values, and requirements. Select the UAB Hospital tab, click the References drop-down box in the left sidebar, and click on Lab Redbook. The alerts will remain on SCR for 1 month.

EYE PATHOLOGY ONLINE

The National Eye Institute announces a new online resource for pathologists, ophthalmologists, optometrists, and students. The David G. Cogan Ophthalmic Pathology Collection, a study and teaching compilation of clinical ophthalmic cases and their pathology, serves as a critical component to further understanding of eye diseases and their treatments. www.nei.nih.gov.

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.
House Staff Council

University Hospital’s House Staff Council, composed of resident physician representatives from each accredited program, is dedicated to addressing issues related to graduate medical education. The council serves as a resident advocate and voice throughout the hospital, university, and community. The representatives, selected each year by their program director, must possess leadership skills, express the desire to serve as a resident advocate, and have completed a year of residency training at University Hospital.

In addition to attending monthly meetings, many representatives commit additional time to researching information, planning events, and serving on committees, such as the Dean’s Council for Graduate Medical Education, which oversees University Hospital’s residency and subspecialty programs. Opportunities also are available to serve on the University of Alabama School of Medicine Alumni Association’s Board of Directors, the hospital Grievance Committee, the Veterans Affairs Dean’s Committee, and the hospital’s Critical Care Committee, which evaluates and implements code-10 policies, among others.

The council also has been responsible for securing extra benefits for residents, including group discounts on disability insurance, interstate moving services, cellular phone service, and fitness-club memberships. The council also sponsors an annual party for residents.

Residency programs are assigned a specified number of representative seats, based on program size. For more information, contact House Staff Council President Eddie Mathews, MD, through the paging operator, 934-3411.

HELP DESK

Call the Health System Information Services Help Desk at 934-8888 or 801-7777 to report unscheduled service interruptions.

16th Floor Lounges

The 16th Floor of Jefferson Tower offers residents call rooms and other facilities, including a lounge (Room 1625) with a large-screen television, reading materials, and telephones. A dining area (Room 1621) is available with vending machines, a refrigerator, microwave, and television.

Residents can work out in the exercise area (Room 1620), equipped with exercise equipment, including a Life-Step machine, LifeCycles, a Hoist 4000 exercise station, and benches and barbells.