

UAB MEDICINE

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of the School of Medicine

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Turning POINTS

CHASING CHALLENGES
WITH DEAN WATTS

Fall/Winter
2010

Cover Story



Turning Points

{ Chasing Challenges with Dean Watts }

On the Cover

Ray L. Watts, M.D., who became dean in September, is optimistic about the future of medicine—and UAB's place in it.

The School of Medicine's new dean has made a career of tackling tough choices. Now he is developing ambitious strategies and goals to help UAB excel in a new era of American health care.

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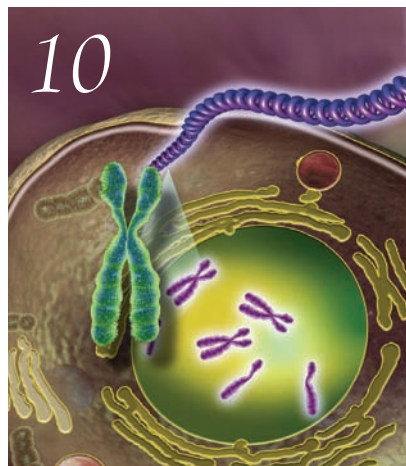
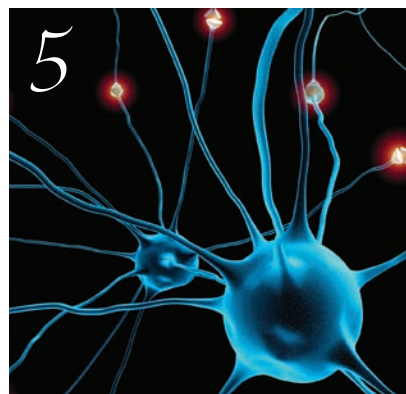
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WEB EXCLUSIVE: Medicine.uab.edu/magazine
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Verneeda Spencer, M.D.

Discover the challenges of providing cancer care on the Last Frontier.



Dean's Corner

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

In the world of academics, fall is the season of new beginnings. New students arrive on campus, new courses begin, and it seems that everyone has a renewed spirit for learning and discovery.

This fall is a particularly exciting time at the School of Medicine because we are beginning a comprehensive review and update of our strategic plans in research and education. These plans will help us take stock of where we are and identify areas where we can become national leaders in medicine. In addition, we are developing a strategic plan for primary care. Under the health care reform legislation, primary care assumes a central role in American medicine, and we have an opportunity to work with our students, faculty, alumni, and colleagues to ensure that we provide excellent primary care to the people of Alabama.

These strategic plans will complement the UAB Health System's new clinical plans, and they have the potential to attract at least 100 new faculty, tens of millions of dollars in research funding, and countless patients to UAB. More important, they will help make the School of Medicine an exciting place where important discoveries are made—and where those discoveries are translated into new treatments and cures for the most devastating diseases.

I believe we can achieve the ambitious goals in these plans with your help. They will require a major investment of time, energy, and money, but if we join together to see them through, then we will all reap the rewards of the innovative new treatments, the increased prestige, and the economic boost that are sure to follow.

I look forward to working with you, hearing from you, and providing updates on our progress.

Best regards,

Ray L. Watts



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Latest Rankings:

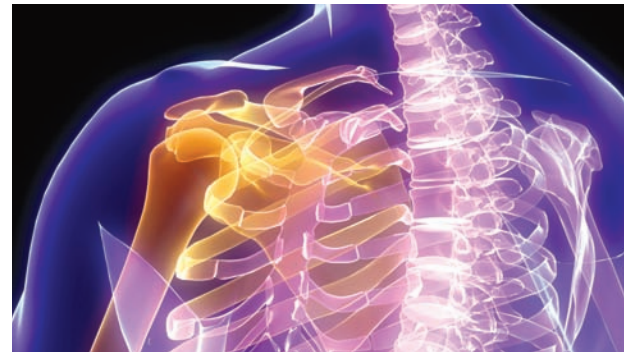
Where UAB stands in *U.S. News & World Report's* latest list of America's top graduate schools and hospitals:

School of Medicine graduate programs:

- AIDS #9
- Rural medicine #14
- Geriatrics #15
- Internal medicine #16
- Primary care #23
- Research #26
- Biological sciences Ph.D. #34

UAB Hospital specialties:

- Rheumatology #11
- Kidney disorders #13
- Gynecology #17
- Geriatrics #24
- Pulmonary #24
- Urology #24
- Heart and heart surgery #31
- Neurology and neurosurgery #31
- Cancer #39
- Ear, nose, and throat #42
- Gastroenterology #42



Osteoporosis: The Global Longitudinal Study of Osteoporosis in Women (GLOW) shows that many women at an elevated risk for osteoporosis-related fractures fail to realize the implications. Only one in three women in GLOW reporting two or more major risk factors for fracture perceived themselves as being at higher risk for fracture than their age-matched peers. The study authors recommend urgent improvement in education for physicians and postmenopausal women about osteoporosis risk factors. UAB is one of 17 GLOW study sites worldwide.



Blood Transfusion: “Red blood cell lesion,” the potentially harmful changes in red blood cells that have been stored long after collection, is now the focus of a study by UAB pathology, microbiology, and surgery researchers. The research may shed light on the mechanisms of how red blood cells interact with nitric oxide during circulation to control blood flow and immune response, and determine if this control is lost when red blood cells age in storage. The findings could help scientists design therapies to prevent transfusion-related toxicities. The study is funded by a \$1.47-million National Institutes of Health grant.

Cancer:

- The UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center, in collaboration with the University of Minnesota, has won an \$11.5-million National Cancer Institute (NCI) grant to explore groundbreaking pancreatic cancer research, prevention, and treatment. The pancreatic Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE) will focus on translational studies, focusing on identification of biomarkers for early diagnosis, targeted therapy using monoclonal antibodies, the genomic analysis of cancer regulators, and tests of experimental agents to target pancreatic cancer stem cells.
- The UAB Cancer Center’s Deep South Network for Cancer Control received a five-year, \$6-million NCI grant that will establish it as one of six National Community Network Program Centers. The funds will enable the Deep South Network to expand its work to reduce cancer disparities among minority and medically underserved populations in Alabama’s Black Belt, the Mississippi Delta, and two urban areas in both states. The network has worked with more than 1,000 community health advisors trained as research partners, volunteers who educate family and friends about cancer prevention and early detection.
- A vaccine designed to prevent cervical cancer may also protect women from postsurgical recurrence of the disease, says recent UAB research. The Gardasil vaccine reduces the chances—by up to 40 percent—that human papillomavirus (HPV)-related disease will reappear up to 3.8 years after surgery to remove cancer or precancerous changes. The results are encouraging because patients treated for HPV-related disease are at a higher risk for postoperative recurrence.

Diabetes: Anath Shalev, M.D., has joined UAB as director of the Comprehensive Diabetes Center. The noted clinician, researcher, and mentor previously served as director of endocrinology, diabetes, and metabolism research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Shalev’s work focuses on pancreatic beta cell biology and diabetes complications, along with studies of the mechanisms of cell death and the regulation of gene transcription. She helped perform the first human pancreatic islet microarray study, discovering a protein that responded dramatically to glucose and induced beta cell apoptosis when overexpressed in mice. Deletion of this protein effectively rescued mice from diabetes, making it an attractive therapeutic target.

Ophthalmology: Eye disease and vision impairment rates among older African Americans are twice as high as those for older whites, particularly for glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy, due in part to less access to proper medical care. Now a \$1.5-million, five-year grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will enable UAB to create a Translational Research Center and collaborate with Cooper Green Mercy Hospital/Jefferson Health System to find ways to remove barriers to care, which may involve cost, lack of communication, and a shortage of eye care providers in high-risk populations. The center will include UAB ophthalmology and surgery faculty along with colleagues in the optometry and public health schools and Cooper Green Mercy Hospital.

Malaria: A UAB-led international research group has identified the origins of the most deadly form of malaria—a landmark discovery that pinpoints a single cross-species jump to humans from western gorillas thousands of years ago. Published in *Nature*, the study of *Plasmodium falciparum* could lead to further research into the mosquito-borne disease, which kills more than one million people each year. The scientists made the breakthrough by analyzing DNA in fecal samples from the wild apes—the same method that helped a UAB-led team of scientists to discover the origins of HIV in chimpanzees in west central Africa in 1999.



[Web Exclusive]



Alumni Profile:
Verneeda Spencer, M.D.



Discover the challenges of providing cancer care on the Last Frontier. Medicine.uab.edu/magazine



HeLa, the first immortal human cell line, has become one of medicine's most ubiquitous and important tools—a key to breakthroughs in everything from polio and cancer to AIDS and genetic diseases. Rebecca Skloot, author of the bestseller *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, spoke about the little-known African-American tobacco farmer who provided the cells as part of UAB's Reynolds Historical Lecture series. She also discussed the story's negative side—the removal of the cells without Henrietta's knowledge, the fact that her family was not told about the cells for two decades, the violation of patient confidentiality, and the lack of compensation—and connected it to current bioethical debates, including ownership of patient tissues used in research.

Immunology: A recent UAB study has changed the way scientists view T cells, the white blood cells that are key to the immune system's ability to fight infectious disease. It was thought that Th1 and Th17 cells, two subclasses of T cells, and their daughter cells did not differentiate or change, making only their unique combination of proteins. Now UAB pathology researchers have discovered that with certain environmental cues, Th17 cells will no longer make their distinct proteins and begin to create the products of Th1 cells. Understanding Th17 "plasticity" could help scientists harness the destructive potential of these cells to treat autoimmune diseases, uncontrolled inflammation, and cancer.

Metabolic Syndrome: Eating a higher-fat breakfast may actually help prevent metabolic syndrome. UAB cardiovascular disease and epidemiology researchers report that mice fed a fat-rich meal after waking had normal metabolic profiles, while those eating a carbohydrate-rich morning diet and a high-fat evening meal saw increased weight gain, glucose intolerance, and other metabolic syndrome markers. The first meal appears to program metabolism for the rest of the day, which could mean that timing of dietary intake could be important for weight management along with food quality and quantity. Further testing is necessary to see if the results apply to humans.

Pulmonology: Cigarette smoke shuts off a key enzyme in airways that regulates the body's response to inflammation, says new UAB research. The study found that smoke inhibits Leukotriene A4 Hydrolase (LTA4H), causing it to fail in its role of shutting down white blood cells following a successful response to inflammation. The researchers also identified a previously unknown substrate of LTA4H called proline-glycine-proline (PGP), which recruits the white blood cells. The findings could answer questions about and point to potential treatments for lung diseases that involve chronic inflammation, including cystic fibrosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.



More UAB Research Breakthroughs

- The nicotine in cigarette smoke might hasten kidney disease in diabetic patients.
- Women whose cholesterol is too high or too low before pregnancy may be at risk for delivering a premature baby.
- Women drinking more than 329 milligrams of caffeine a day (about three cups of coffee) are 70 percent more likely to have urinary incontinence than those who don't.

Visit www.uab.edu/news for details on these new discoveries.

Continence: The National Association for Continence has selected UAB as the country's first Center of Excellence: Continence Care. The accolade recognizes UAB's Continence and Urogynecology Care Clinics for the extensive training and clinical experience of their faculty, their resources, and patient satisfaction.

Technology developed by UAB neurosurgeon **Barton Guthrie, M.D.**, could help physicians save lives in distant locations, but it might also help soldiers dismantle bombs or assist mechanics as they repair airplanes and automobiles. The Virtual Interactive Presence software blends elements of virtual and augmented reality to superimpose a video image of a pair of hands in one location over another pair of hands in a different location. Both viewers see the same image, which means that surgeons at two sites could work through a procedure together, with an expert literally pointing a local physician in the best direction. Guthrie collaborated with UAB's School of Engineering for three years to develop the first-of-its-kind software, which works with existing monitors, Web cameras, and Internet connections. VIPAAR, a Birmingham-based technology company, has licensed the technology from UAB to commercialize it in a variety of industries.



Neurology:

- UAB is one of 18 study sites for the Parkinson's Progression Markers Initiative (PPMI), a key clinical study sponsored by the Michael J. Fox Foundation. The \$40-million, five-year study will use advanced imaging, tissue sampling, and behavioral assessments to identify biomarkers for Parkinson's progression, which in turn will lead to improved diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of the disease.
- UAB's Alzheimer's Disease Center received a \$3-million, five-year grant from the National Institute on Aging to continue its Cognitive Observation in Seniors (COINS) study. The project is designed to detect changes in financial capacity in patients with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), an Alzheimer's precursor, using both neuroimaging and a clinical tool that tests patients on 20 financial tasks. Declining financial skills could one day serve as a functional marker for Alzheimer's progression.

Honors

- Pharmacology and toxicology professor Stephen Barnes, Ph.D., was appointed to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Council of Councils, where he will advise the NIH director on program coordination, planning, and strategic initiatives.
- Charles Landen, M.D., is one of seven researchers to receive the inaugural Ovarian Cancer Academy Award, part of the U.S. Department of Defense funding for cancer research. Landen, an assistant professor of gynecologic oncology, received \$1.06 million for his studies of ovarian cancer cells that have enhanced ability to survive chemotherapy and cause recurrence.
- Yi-Pang Li, Ph.D., an expert on cellular and molecular mechanisms of bone resorption and formation, was named to the new Jay M. McDonald Endowed Professorship in Bone Pathology.
- Shin Oh, M.D., distinguished professor of neurology and pathology, is one of four advisory members of the World Health Organization's International Code of Diseases (ICD) 11 Peripheral Nerves Disorders section. The group reviews and recommends updates for ICD 10 codes, the standard in much of the world.
- Cynthia Owsley, Ph.D., the Nathan E. Miles Chair in Ophthalmology, has been appointed to the scientific committee of Prevent Blindness America, one of the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organizations.
- Isabel Scarinci, Ph.D., associate professor of preventive medicine, received an award

in Brazil for her work to help pass one of the country's strictest anti-smoking laws. He leads a network linking UAB and Brazilian universities and government authorities that promotes tobacco control efforts and helped lobby for the law.

- Sergio Stagno, M.D., chair of the Department of Pediatrics and the Katharine Reynolds Ireland Distinguished Professor of Pediatrics, has been named president of the University of Alabama Health Services Foundation.
- Victor J. Thannickal, M.D., known for his research on mechanisms of acute lung injury and interstitial lung disease, was appointed to the Ben Vaughan Branscomb Chair of Medicine in Respiratory Disease.
- Ryan Walsh, M.D., Schumann Fellow of Neurology, was one of 14 scientists nationwide awarded a grant from the Parkinson's Disease Foundation. The grants support young investigators and "high-risk, high-reward" projects that may significantly impact research into causes and a cure. Walsh's experimental studies use MRI to understand the disease's effect on the brain.
- Metastasis expert Danny Welch, Ph.D., was named to the Susan G. Komen for the Cure scientific advisory council, joining more than 60 scientists, physicians, and advocates from seven countries to guide the organization's breast-cancer research. He is the Leonard H. Robinson Endowed Professor in Pathology.



Turning POINTS

Chasing Challenges with Dean Watts

Ray Watts made the choice that would change his life when the phone rang one sunny Saturday in April. The college senior had earned a spot in one of the nation's most prestigious graduate engineering programs. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology was literally and figuratively on the line. Would he accept?

No, Watts told them. He was going to medical school instead. He wanted to chase the bigger challenge. Thirty-four years later, another decision has presented Watts with his greatest challenge yet: leading the School of Medicine forward as dean and senior vice president for medicine.

“Many friends have asked what in the world I’m thinking to become dean at this time in American medicine,” he says. “My answer is that we can either be pessimistic or excited about the future. I am in the latter camp.”

At each turning point in his career, Watts has gravitated toward the toughest choices. That winding path has led to accomplishments in academic medicine and world-renowned breakthroughs in Parkinson’s disease research and care. Before becoming dean, the 56-year-old Birmingham native led the UAB Department of Neurology as the John N. Whitaker Endowed Chair, was chief of the UAB Hospital Neurology Service, and served as president of the University of Alabama Health Services Foundation (HSF). “The joy that I’ve experienced comes from attacking important problems and working with others to add knowledge and bring that to bear on the diseases affecting our patients, families, and communities,” Watts says.

Now his challenges include the uncertainties of health care reform and tight research budgets at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The good news is that UAB investigators are highly competitive in securing funding, Watts says. As for health care reform, “we have to make sure it changes medicine in a positive way. We have studied it carefully and are building a thoughtful, proactive response.” UAB has many opportunities to lead under the legislation, he adds. “We’re going to try new things and be innovative, but not let the outstanding quality of our care deteriorate.”

Engineering New Strategies

Watts knows quite a bit about the structure and organization of complex systems. Upon graduating from Birmingham’s West End High School, the science and math aficionado planned to become an electrical engineer. He first encountered biomedical research as a UAB undergraduate, spending a summer in a lab working with engineers who studied speech articulation. The science—and the body’s many mysteries—excited him. “Biological systems are non-linear, unlike mechanical and electrical systems, and they were hard to model,” he says. “The body is a combination of these complex systems, but it’s all built on fundamental principles.”

The complex system known as the School of Medicine also adheres to fundamental principles—its mission of teaching, research, and patient care. Watts aims to reinvigorate all three with a comprehensive strategic planning process.

In November, Watts initiated a review and update of the school’s research and education plans, and he began developing a primary care plan. He started the process by examining each clinical and Joint Health Sciences department to gain a greater understanding of their strengths, challenges, and goals. By spring 2011, all three

“People want to invest in the future, in solutions, in new treatments that are going to make an impact.”
—Ray Watts

plans will be ready for rapid implementation, with tangible milestones to assess progress.

The school’s plans will complement the UAB Health System’s clinical strategic plan positioning UAB as the preferred academic medical center of the 21st century, known as AMC21. As HSF president, Watts became intimately familiar with AMC21 and its emphasis on excellence and innovation. “From the beginning, our plan has been to integrate research and educational strategic planning with clinical care so that they synergize and strengthen our overall mission.” (See page 9 for basic outlines of the plans.)

Growth Factors

At Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Watts quickly found his niche in neuroscience, gravitating to adult neurology. With his background in engineering and signal processing, he relished the challenge of discovering how the brain works. Watts honed his specialty with a residency at Massachusetts General Hospital and a fellowship at the National Institute of Mental Health. There he began to focus on the brain’s connections to movement disorders such as Parkinson’s disease.

Then he faced another choice: Take the “perfect job” at Columbia University, home to the nation’s biggest and best movement disorders program, or go to Emory University, where no such program existed.

Watts headed to Atlanta. “Emory was a young organization, much like UAB, with a lot of energy,” Watts says. Over the next 17 years, he helped his department grow from 12 faculty to around 70. “We moved from nowhere into the top five in NIH funding, and we built a world-class movement disorders center.”

Watts hasn’t lost one watt of that energy. At the SOM, he plans to add at least 100 net new faculty in clinical departments, Joint Health Sciences departments, and collaborating academic units over the next five to six years. The additional investigators could attract \$35 to \$75 million in new research grants, Watts estimates. Such gains would likely allow UAB to advance further in NIH rankings, but Watts emphasizes that high-impact discoveries that transform biomedical science and medical treatments for serious diseases are far more important than rankings.

He also promises to “recognize and reward” current faculty by positioning them for national leadership roles—and by involving both senior and junior faculty in the strategic planning process.



“We need to invigorate our can-do attitude. The best and brightest people want to be at a place aiming for great achievements,” he says.

Watts also wants to set priorities. “No place can be the best in everything. We’re going to have to focus on strategic areas where we can be among the best in the country and the world—areas where we have the greatest opportunities and that reflect our greatest strengths. By investing in these, we can create programs that attract the best faculty and students, research grants, philanthropy, and patients from all over the country.”

Collaboration is another crucial goal. Watts plans to build relationships with physicians across Alabama—the people caring for the patients who will ultimately benefit from the school’s growth—through UAB’s CME programs, the Medical Alumni Association (MAA), the Medical Association of the State of Alabama (MASA), and health-professional organizations. He also wants to involve other schools on UAB’s campus in SOM initiatives. “We can learn from each other,” he says.

Watts is especially excited about meeting the school’s alumni, hearing their ideas, and encouraging them to support the growth of the school. “It’s a natural partnership,” Watts says. “Our alumni have a lot to share, and I want them to be involved with our current students, our house staff, and our faculty. Their degrees are going to become more valuable as they go forward and keep learning, keep growing, and keep helping others. I want us to partner with them to help provide the best care to our citizens and to define the future of medicine.”

Pushing the Envelope

Inside a lab at Emory, Watts made a discovery about himself. Though he loved basic science research, he was growing impatient. He wanted to quicken the development of treatments for patients suffering from debilitating neurological diseases.

He refocused his career toward translating research breakthroughs into clinical innovations—which brought him back to UAB in 2003. “One thing that attracted me was the chance to create a new kind of center, the Center for Neurodegeneration and Experimental Therapeutics,” he says. “We’re studying brain diseases with progressive cell death either in memory pathways or movement pathways, but with a focus on taking animal or molecular models, learning what goes wrong, and developing targeted therapies. Our goal is to develop disease-modifying neuroprotective therapies that will cure Huntington’s disease, Lou Gehrig’s disease, Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s, and others.”

As UAB neurology chair, Watts also spearheaded the creation of the Comprehensive Neuroscience Center, “a collaborative environment where we can help each other be more successful.” Investigators are able to work on two or three lines of research rather than only one, multiplying their productivity. Basic scientists interact with clinical scientists, “which is absolutely necessary if we’re going to solve big issues like memory disorders. It takes teams; no individual can do all those things.” Watts notes that more than 200 UAB researchers are now part of the center. “It has transformed our ability to treat these diseases. We don’t have a cure yet, but that’s the next phase.”

In the neurology department and now in the dean's office, Watts views himself as a venture capitalist. "We must invest in ourselves if we expect others to invest," he says. "To get where we want to go, we're going to need to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in institutional as well as philanthropic funds." His fund-raising goal is \$150 million—with \$50 million reserved for endowments—and he is confident that it will pay dividends.

"People want to invest in the future, in solutions, in new treatments that are going to make an impact. With institutional support and a forward-looking strategic plan, we can reach out to community members and leaders to partner with us and accelerate our progress. Many of these donations help us take chances and push the research envelope, and if we're successful, then it leads to more success. That's what the future's about."

Watts says that Alabama's business and community leaders are ready to invest in UAB. He was pleased to see UAB listed as a top priority in the Birmingham Business Alliance's new Blueprint Birmingham strategic plan. "The state and community want us to develop our ideas," he says.

Defining the Future

The new dean isn't afraid to get his hands dirty. At home he's an avid gardener who "likes to grow beautiful things." He also enjoys deep-sea fishing and spending time with his family, which includes his wife, Nancy, a UAB neurology nurse, and five grown children—two of whom are following in his footsteps as physicians.

Now Watts hopes to grow something beautiful at the School of Medicine, and it is a challenge he eagerly accepts. "We have an opportunity to be one of the leading academic medical centers in the country over the coming decade," he says. "We are going to change the future of medicine and biomedical science."



Foundations for the Future

A Preview of the Strategic Plans

Education

- Become a leader in lifelong physician learning, from undergraduate and graduate medical education through continuing medical education.
- Assess the effectiveness of the current curriculum and update it as necessary.
- Continue reorganizing the graduate biomedical sciences Ph.D. programs around disciplines rather than departments.
- Promote professionalism throughout the school.

Research

- Add 100 net new faculty over five to six years.
- Reinvigorate six strategic priority areas—cancer; cardiovascular biology/diseases; diabetes and metabolic disorders; infectious diseases and vaccines; immunology, autoimmunity, and transplantation; and neurosciences—and five cross-disciplinary platforms—imaging; informatics; genomics, proteomics, and metabolomics; outcomes/health care effectiveness research; and the fundamental disciplines encompassed by the Center for Clinical and Translational Science.
- Ensure that priority areas help elevate and push resources to all research areas.
- Engage UAB's other schools, including the Graduate School, in research collaborations.

Primary Care

- Make UAB a leader in primary care, which Watts calls "fundamentally important" to modern health care in the wake of reform, and a key responsibility for the school.
- Strengthen primary care education and training programs, from undergraduate courses through residencies and fellowships.
- Partner with practicing physicians statewide to enhance primary care education, training, and care.
- Work with the state, the MAA, and MASA to encourage graduates to practice primary care in Alabama.

See and hear more from the new dean at uab.edu/deanwatts.

Research Focus

Signal Discoveries

By Bob Shepard and Troy Goodman

Biomarkers are nature's version of a flashing neon arrow, alerting physicians to changes in disease risk or progression. But new biomarkers recently discovered by UAB researchers also are shedding light on the causes of two major diseases—and could pave the way for personalized treatments.

Multiple Causes, Multiple Outcomes

For many physicians and patients, multiple sclerosis (MS) seems to have multiple personalities. While some people respond well to initial treatments, others experience no change or struggle with worsening symptoms. Now UAB researchers may finally know why after identifying the first biomarker for MS.

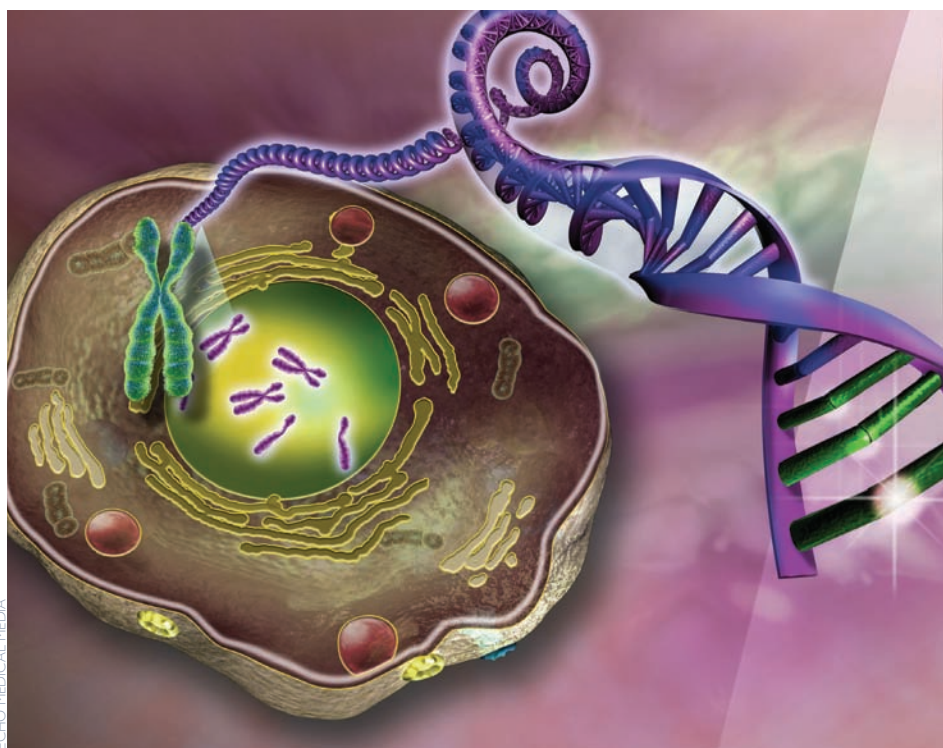
The UAB team, collaborating with researchers at Stanford University and Dutch scientists, found that a patient's particular blend of T helper immune cells can make the difference in how they respond to treatment. "Interferon- β is typically the first therapeutic choice for most MS patients, but there is a subset of about 30 percent of patients for whom it does not work and may make the patient worse," says Chander Raman, Ph.D., associate professor in the UAB Division of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology and the study's lead investigator. "Our findings, in both animal and human models, indicate that the type of T helper cell present is the determining factor in predicting whether interferon- β will be effective."

Both T helper Type 1 (Th1) cells and T helper Type 17 (Th17) cells are major initiators of MS and important in disease severity. Raman's team, which included Patrizia De Sarno, Ph.D., and Rodrigo Naves, and the Stanford researchers found that interferon- β was effective in mice with disease initiated by Th1 cells, but worsened disease initiated by Th17 cells. The results were replicated with striking consistency in analysis of human-patient serum with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis, the most common form of the disease.

Raman suggests the biomarker breakthrough might be another rung on the ladder leading to personalized medicine, in which therapies are based on an individual patient's physiology and genetic makeup and the nature of disease.

"When our findings are verified in an expanded human trial, a simple blood test could help determine which type of T helper cell is predominantly responsible for the disease in an MS patient, enabling clinicians to provide the proper therapy from the beginning of treatment and eliminate the guesswork," Raman says.

"This research reinforces the concept that diseases have certain signatures that help define their origin and give us glimpses of how they manifest in our bodies," Raman adds. "The more we understand these signatures, the more likely we will be able to intervene



Biomarkers provide disease "signatures" that could help physicians tailor treatments to specific patients.

at a critical junction and design and provide therapies that lessen or cure disease."

Catching Aggressive Cancer

UAB Department of Pathology researchers, in partnership with Morehouse School of Medicine, have discovered a set of four biomarkers that will help predict which patients are more likely to develop aggressive colorectal cancer. The findings also offer a genetic reason why African Americans have worse outcomes for colorectal-cancer treatment than Caucasians.

Liselle Bovell, a graduate student in the laboratory of UAB associate professor Upender Manne, Ph.D., found that patients with higher levels of a genetic biomarker called microRNA (miRNA) had an increased risk of death after treatment for colorectal cancer. In particular, higher levels of miRNA-21 and miRNA-106a molecules signaled poorer prognosis after treatment for both Caucasian and African-American patients compared with patients who did not have the higher miRNA levels. The presence of higher levels of miRNA-181b and miRNA-203 indicated poorer prognosis after treatment for African-American patients, but not for Caucasians.

"This knowledge gives us solid, prognostic information, so we can better manage patients with these cancers early after diagnosis or surgery," Bovell says.

Manne agrees. "Our findings underscore the potential clinical usefulness of miRNAs in studying cancer risk and cancer progression, and we've shown that race and ethnicity should be considered in the evaluation," he says.

Building a Preference

Strategic Plan Enhances UAB Clinical Care

By Tara Hulen

A reputation for being the best isn't always good enough. UAB offers renowned physicians, leading-edge therapies and technologies, innovative research, and a top teaching hospital, but it needs something else in order to fulfill its patient care, education, and research missions: It also must be the place patients choose for their health care.

"UAB's goal is to be the preferred academic medical center for the 21st century," says UAB Health System CEO Will Ferniany, Ph.D. Last year, he set in motion a new clinical strategic plan, referred to as AMC21, to identify ways to reach that goal. "We plan to achieve this by capitalizing on UAB's strong heritage of innovation and interdisciplinary cooperation," he says.

Max Michael, M.D., dean of UAB's School of Public Health and AMC21 chair, explains that there's an important difference between being the premier academic medical center and being the medical center preferred by patients and their referring physicians. "You can have the best, most technologically sophisticated care on the face of the planet, but if folks don't come to you, it doesn't do you any good."

A 15-member AMC21 task force, composed of individuals across UAB's campus, turned to "thought leaders across the country to grapple with what distinguishes an academic medical center from other regional health systems," Michael explains. "Clearly it is the tripartite mission of patient care, education, and research. However, patient care is paramount; its success will ultimately determine the success of the research and educational enterprises."

When reviewing patient care, the task force honestly acknowledged situations they had heard about frequently, Michael says, and the issues largely focus on what happens before a patient visits a doctor's office. For example, physically getting to a clinic at UAB can be intimidating, especially for people not familiar with the area, Michael says, and months-long waits to see specialists frustrate patients, causing the system to lose some of them to other institutions.

The AMC21 plan provides several avenues to develop concrete solutions, says Scott E. Buchalter, M.D., UAB Health System chief quality officer. He describes an Innovation Board that will quickly test and evaluate novel ideas that can be applied in rapidly changing environments and help enhance coordination of care and access for patients and their physicians. The innovation process "will welcome input from anyone," he says.

The plan also reflects trends that are transforming the delivery of care, Buchalter says. These include an emphasis on performance and value over volume, personalized medicine, preemptive medicine—focusing on regenerative, preventive, and wellness care—palliative care and end-of-life issues, and the increased use of information technology, among others.

In addition, the task force has recommended strengthening relationships with external physicians and referral networks. Tighter connections and communication will ensure that physicians know about UAB's unique resources and variety of expertise, which in turn will benefit patients.

The AMC21 strategic plan for clinical care follows the development of the School of Medicine's research strategic plan, says Buchalter, and since its first meeting in November 2009, the AMC21 task force has made significant progress toward its goal. "We envision an ongoing effort to continually define our direction and growth in pursuit of our vision of becoming a preferred academic medical center," he says. "At the core is excellent and outstanding patient care."



The UAB Health System's AMC21 plan touches every aspect of care, from increasing the efficiency of clinical organization to enhancing the patient experience.



Open House

Radiation Oncology Center Welcomes First Patients

By Troy Goodman

James Bonner, M.D., has found the one thing he hoped to see inside UAB's new Hazelrig-Salter Radiation Oncology Center: pleased patients. "We're seeing more smiles on their faces, and we hear compliments on the decor and building layout," says the chair of UAB's Department of Radiation Oncology. "It is heartwarming."

"A world-class cancer center should have a world-class radiation center, and now we do," adds UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center Director Edward Partridge, M.D. "No more windowless, basement radiation visits for our cancer patients. They deserve a modern, open place for care."

Light and Space

Opened this spring, the 50,000-square-foot facility replaces the cramped treatment spaces inside Wallace Tumor Institute. The building's design includes wide, easy-to-navigate hallways and spacious, light-filled waiting areas with plush furniture. There's even a play area for pediatric patients and a resource library for adults. Directly outside the facility, the Jim Limbaugh Family Park of Hope

Honoring Phyllis Limbaugh offers a green space for strolling or relaxing, and valet and on-site parking are available.

All of these comforts don't hide the fact that the Hazelrig-Salter facility is one of the most technologically advanced radiation oncology centers in the country, with a radiosurgery program that can handle every aspect of treatment planning and delivery, Bonner says. "We are at the technological forefront of radiation oncology," he explains. "We have physicians who have developed specific expertise in every type of cancer. This enables our group to coordinate and consult with physicians around the region—around the world, actually—to deliver the best treatment that modern medicine has to offer."

The new center has specialty evaluation rooms for pediatric, gynecologic, and head-and-neck cancer patients. The clinical space takes up nearly the entire first floor of the new center, and the second floor has administrative offices, modernized laboratory space, and a conference room with high-tech telemedicine connections.

Accelerated Technology

Many years of planning went into the building's design to ensure that it could accommodate today's newest treatment technologies as well as future advancements. Large treatment rooms feature state-of-the-art linear accelerators, many of which are equipped to follow real-time changes inside a patient such as breathing and tumor movement. The imaging suite houses a 16-slice computed tomography scanner to aid in accurate treatment planning. This year, the center was one of the first three in the nation to begin using TrueBeam, technology by Varian Medical Systems that can deliver image-guided therapy and radiosurgery at new levels of efficiency and accuracy. In some cases, TrueBeam can complete a standard 40-minute radiation therapy in less than a minute.

For patients, the most remarkable feature of each treatment room may be the illuminated, three-dimensional art on the ceiling. The images—of a bright spring sky, a starry night, and deep space—are designed to help ease patient anxiety during treatment. In one room, patients might even spot a few shooting stars.

Located adjacent to UAB Hospital and the new Women & Infants Center, the Hazelrig-Salter center was named by Birmingham businessman Chip Hazelrig in honor of his parents, the late Virginia and William Hazelrig, and their longtime friends, Birmingham physicians Merle and Paul Salter. Merle Salter, M.D., is the former chair of UAB's Department of Radiation Oncology. The Park of Hope is named for another Birmingham businessman, Jim Limbaugh, who lost his wife, Phyllis, to lymphoma in 1981.

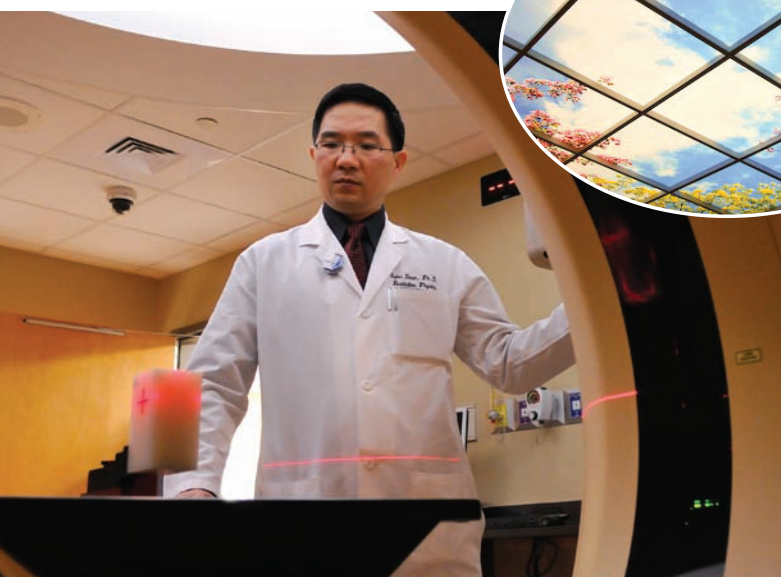
"All this high-tech radiation technology and the new building would be nothing without the people in the community and the excellent faculty who make it all work together," Bonner says.



Left: The front doors of the new radiation oncology center open onto an inviting park.

Below: Radiation physicist Jun Duan, Ph.D., calibrates the CT scanner.

Below right: Illuminated ceiling art helps patients relax during procedures.



Positive Force

Magnetic Therapy Dispels Depression

By Bob Shepard

Depression is a challenge to treat because no single therapy works every time in every patient. Medications aren't effective for everyone, and psychotherapy and electroconvulsive therapy help some patients but do little for others.

That's why UAB psychiatrist Bates Redwine, M.D., is so excited about repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS). This noninvasive therapy delivers a series of highly focused, MRI-strength magnetic pulses to an area of the brain linked to depression—the left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. The Food and Drug Administration approved rTMS therapy within the past two years, and UAB's new device is the only one in Alabama.

"The left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is known to have decreased activity in depressed patients," says Redwine. "But rTMS seems to 'wake up' the neurons, stimulating them to become more active."

Core Concepts

Redwine says the idea that depression may be centered in the left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex comes from examination of stroke patients. People who have stroke in this area have dramatically higher rates of depression than people with strokes in other parts of the brain. Functional MRI and PET studies show that the metabolism in this region is decreased in people who are depressed.

Activating the left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex with rTMS seems to bring relief—and even complete recovery—for some patients. While existing treatments "are wonderful, they only work a certain percentage of the time," Redwine says. "For those who don't tolerate other treatments, or who just don't respond to them, it's good to have another therapy in our toolkit that might prove to be more effective."

The rTMS unit aims a focused beam of magnetic energy—about the size of a roll of quarters—directly through the scalp to the target area. Therapy lasts 40 minutes per day, five days a week, for at least four to six weeks.

"Studies have shown that patients tend to start responding at about four weeks," says Redwine. "Over time, with repeated stimulation, we see a sustained effect of increased metabolism in that part of the brain. The more treatments you have, the more sustained the effect."

Redwine says clinical trials of the rTMS system, which is produced by NeuroStar, showed that more than half of patients treated had significant improvement in depression symptoms. A third had complete remission of all symptoms.

Side effects are minimal, Redwine adds. Some patients report mild headaches from the clatter of the magnet, which sounds like an old electric typewriter. During the procedure, patients sit in an easy chair and can watch TV or even take a nap.

The therapy is not covered by many health insurance plans, although the insurance industry has taken notice. Redwine says that in the long run, the rTMS system may prove to be more economical than current approaches to treating depression. "It's gratifying to have a new tool to offer patients that has demonstrated an impressive success rate," he says.



Psychiatrist Bates Redwine, M.D. (left), administers rTMS therapy. UAB's device is the only one in Alabama.

In Memoriam | *Dale Benos*

By Bob Shepard

Dale J. Benos, Ph.D., conducted research with a ripple effect. By studying the movement of sodium ions in the membranes of surface and nerve cells, he made key discoveries about disease progression. Those could lead to breakthroughs in cystic fibrosis and hypertension—not to mention cancer and AIDS and nephrology and arthritis and even vision diseases.

Benos, 60, who died October 7, was chair of the UAB Department of Physiology and Biophysics and the first to hold the University of Alabama Health Services Foundation Endowed Chair in Biomedical Research. He joined the UAB faculty from Harvard in 1985 and also held cell biology and neurobiology professorships. He was a senior scientist in eight campuswide research centers.

Continuously funded by the NIH since 1976, Benos served as principal investigator on 19 individual research grants. He shared his findings with colleagues in lectures around the world and as president of the American Physiological Society. He also was a member of

eight NIH special study sections, a prolific author and editor, and chaired the UAB Medical Education Committee. In 2007, Benos was named UAB's Distinguished Faculty Lecturer, the academic health center's highest honor.

"Dale Benos was a phenomenal scientist, educator, and person," says Ray Watts, M.D., senior vice president and dean of the School of Medicine. "His leadership at UAB and internationally, as well as his contributions to scientific knowledge and to the training of future scientists, garnered the utmost respect from his friends and colleagues. He will be greatly missed."

The Dale Benos Research Fund has been established to honor his memory and continue his legacy of discovery. Memorial gifts may be sent to UAB Gift Records, AB 1230, 1530 3RD AVE S, BIRMINGHAM AL 35294-0112.



Body of Knowledge

Advancing Gross Anatomy

By Caperton Gillett

Traditional approaches to gross anatomy face one key challenge: perspective. No matter how talented the teacher or how precise the dissection, medical students are always on the outside looking in.

But that view is changing at the School of Medicine at UAB, prompted by the advent of the school's integrated curriculum, which focuses on organ systems and surgical approaches instead of discipline-based blocks, and the rise of digital technologies in medical practice.

Today medical students are just as likely to use a screen as a scalpel in anatomy class, where radiographic imaging and CT and MRI scans add an inside-out perspective to the classical, clinical approach. "We try to integrate radiographic images side by side with the anatomy," says Carrie Elzie, Ph.D., director of the gross anatomy laboratory and assistant professor of cell biology. "Because physicians work with so much medical imaging nowadays, learning spatial relationships is as much a part of anatomy as the study of individual body structures."

Elzie is incorporating additional technology that can help students improve their understanding of the human body. A new band saw makes cross sections that mimic those in radiographic imaging. She also is collaborating with the Department of Radiology to acquire ultrasound equipment. "Students could do ultrasounds on each other in a room right next to the anatomy lab, learn about the organs of the body, and then go into the lab and get an appreciation for what they saw on the screen," she says.

Elzie also relies on creative low-tech tactics to make the subject engaging and more personal for students. While the veins of the brain can be small and hard to see in dissection, "the students can put on swim caps and draw the veins on each others' heads," Elzie explains. "It's an active learning strategy. This year we also did face-painting to explain the nerves associated with the face."

Another change in the curriculum is the inclusion of fourth-year students in the anatomy lab, where they can review the anatomy related to their chosen specialties. "Students appreciate it as a refresher course that will benefit them in their residencies," Elzie says. "And as part of that elective class, they also serve as teaching assistants for the first- and second-year courses. So in addition to doing their own dissections, they are in the lab with the newer students to impart their knowledge. Because the best way to learn really is through teaching."



Patient Teachers

Elzie thinks of the anatomical donors in the lab as her colleagues. "They teach just as much as I do," she says. For first-year medical students, the donors serve as their very first patients.

"The students meet their donors and learn about who they are before they make the first cut," Elzie says. Then, at the end of the anatomy course, each class participates in a memorial service for their donors, showing their appreciation to the families whose generosity has significantly benefited their medical education. "The students use the same donors throughout an entire academic year, and they get tied to them. But they also realize that in that year, the families haven't really had closure yet, and it's a huge sacrifice for the families to be a part of this," Elzie explains. "There is a high level of respect and appreciation in our lab."

Carrie Elzie (above, at left) and her students blend high-tech scanning with traditional dissection to gain a comprehensive understanding of the human body.

Field Notes

Baby Steps

By Susannah Felts

When the average middle-class child begins first grade, he or she has been exposed to 1,700 hours of one-on-one reading time. The average child from a low-income home often has to get by with only 25. It's a divide that can cause problems from day one, since early exposure to reading has been linked to future academic success and higher IQ levels. And it's not the only disparity that many disadvantaged children face from birth.

To help bridge the gaps, UAB co-chief pediatrics resident John McLendon, M.D., has developed Birmingham Baby Cooperative, a sort of "early parenting 101" crash course on issues that can have a long-term impact on child health and growth. The volunteer-run initiative, inspired by a workshop offered by the Harlem Children's Zone in New York, brings new parents together with a range of experts—child psychologists, emergency-room physicians, nurse practitioners, United Way representatives, and others—to discuss the basics of early childhood development and the best ways to meet children's needs in those critical years.

A pilot program ran for five weeks earlier this year, with 25 local families attending at least one weekly session. McLendon says the cooperative's goal is to offer three more five-week programs over the next year.

Spoonfuls of Sugar

Along with the importance of reading, parents learn about positive discipline techniques, child safety, and basic health and hygiene. McLendon notes that one of the most popular sessions included a visit from a UAB periodontist who scooped out spoonful after spoonful of sugar to illustrate the sugar content of soda and candy.

Armed with new information, families participating in the Baby Cooperative are encouraged to swap stories about their attempts to put what they've learned into action. "It's not a PowerPoint presentation where they passively take in a lot of information," McLendon explains. "Instead, the



Birmingham Baby Cooperative sessions help new parents learn about the basics of early childhood development from child-health experts.

parents explain the trials that they're going through every day. Then the session leaders discuss how to make it better. But we don't pretend like we have all the answers, and that's what really makes a difference—parents feel like they're listened to, and they're part of a group of people having the same experiences, working for the benefit of their children."

Families also receive tangible incentives for sticking with the program: free packs of diapers and breakfast and lunch at each weekly session, up to 20 books to stock the little one's home library, and even free car seats. The cooperative also introduces parents to a wealth of helpful community resources they might not be aware of—everything from subsidized child care to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which provides free books by mail every month for any child up to age five.

A Powerful Lesson

McLendon relied on his contacts in the UAB pediatrics department—including

professionals at the Sparks Clinic and Children's Hospital as well as members of the Baptist Church of the Covenant community—to get the pilot program up and running. "It could not have been done without these volunteers," he notes. "And we want to keep it that way, because that's the best way to expand to other places. It keeps the cost extremely low." He hopes the program will one day reach cities and towns across Alabama—a state where 71 percent of public-school fourth-graders read below grade level.

For McLendon, launching the Baby Cooperative just seemed like the right thing to do. He thinks of it as a continuation of his work prior to medical school, when he taught high school in Butler County, Alabama, the predominantly low-income area where he grew up. "I got to know those kids, and working with them on a daily basis was a powerful lesson," he says. "Ever since coming to medical school, I've wanted to help families who are less fortunate."



Physicians' Forum

RETHINKING CME

By Charles Buchanan

Health care's rapid evolution in both knowledge and practice has been accompanied by a new emphasis on continuing medical education (CME)—and a reevaluation of how it is delivered. **Monika Safford, M.D.**, the School of Medicine's new assistant dean of CME and an associate professor in UAB's Division of Preventive Medicine, discusses recent changes in training for practicing physicians and describes the diversity of educational options that are now available.



Monika Safford, M.D.

MONIKA SAFFORD, M.D.

Beginning in 2010, the Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners increased the number of CME credits a physician must complete each year to maintain his or her license to 25. This increase more than doubled the requirement for physicians practicing in the state, but it is only one of many changes in the new landscape of CME.

Just as recent years have brought about advances in diagnostic tools and clinical treatments for all sorts of conditions and diseases, so too have they brought about change in the way that physicians learn about them. More and more, providers of CME are called on to ensure that the educational activities they offer to physicians are relevant to practice and serve to improve physician performance and patient health rather than simply expanding physician knowledge or awareness of the information. Annual specialty society conferences and grand rounds still play an important role in keeping physicians up to date, but they have given way to other, more interactive educational formats, including online courses and other innovative uses of technology, Internet searches conducted at the point of patient care, and performance- or systems-improvement activities. These types of CME activities tend to engage participants more actively in the learning and change process and are expected to have a more dramatic impact on the quality of patient care.

The Division of CME at UAB, both on campus and through its Alabama Practice-Based CME Network, provides a full array of educational activities for subspecialists and primary-care providers alike. With its mission of outreach, the division continually assesses physician knowledge, competence, and performance and develops, sponsors, and disseminates educational products around topics of greatest need. Just as important, the division uses methods of implementation science to rigorously measure the effectiveness of its activities in changing practice and improving patient health outcomes. Not only does this research

“More and more, CME providers must ensure that educational activities are relevant to practice.”

—Monika Safford

approach to education ensure that UAB offers activities of the highest quality, but it also positions the division as a leader in the maturing field of CME.

Historically, the field of CME has been largely supported with the robust resources of industry. However, increased standards for identifying and resolving conflicts of interest within CME activities have changed the sources of available funding, and it is now clear that the professional development of physicians is no longer sustainable with only the support of pharmaceutical and medical-device companies. Rather, all stakeholders must invest in physician education that produces meaningful outcomes. The UAB Division of CME stands at the forefront of sponsoring education free of commercial bias, only engaging sponsors when satisfied that the research and educational activities can be accomplished without any appearance of commercial intrusion.

It is an exciting time for CME, and the UAB Division of CME is eager to involve physicians across campus, across the state, and across the nation in the next generation of CME. For more information on the types of contributions you can make, please visit our Web site.

UAB Division of CME
www.cme.uab.edu

Trailblazer

Constance Pittman

By Lisa C. Bailey

Constance Pittman, M.D., lived an epic life. In her 81 years, she went from war-torn China to the world stage, where her efforts to eliminate iodine deficiency have helped improve the lives of countless people. But to her colleagues at UAB, she was simply “Connie,” a professor emerita of medicine with a legacy of compassion and service as an endocrinology physician, researcher, educator, and friend.

Born in Nanking, China, Pittman, then known as Ming-Chung Shen, discovered her love for medicine during World War II, working as a nurse in a makeshift operating room on the Burma Road. She came to the United States as a teenager in 1946, attending school in Boston and later enrolling in Wellesley College. In 1955, she graduated from Harvard Medical School and married James A. Pittman Jr., M.D., the future dean of the School of Medicine at UAB. After an internship with the Johns Hopkins Service at Baltimore City Hospital, Constance and James Pittman moved to Birmingham in 1956. She joined the medical school’s faculty in 1961 following an endocrinology fellowship with S. Richardson Hill, M.D.

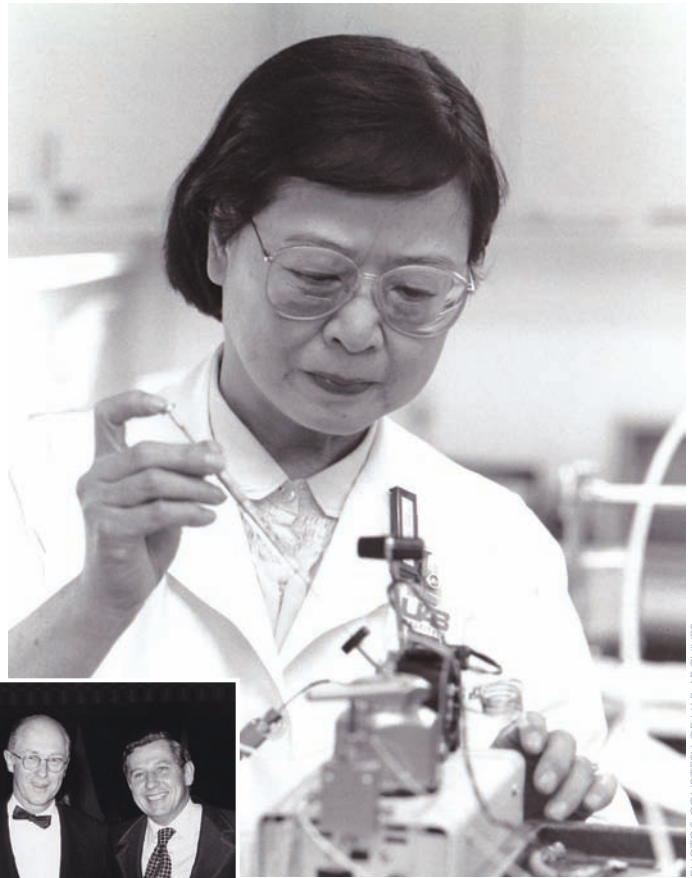
Endocrinology Advances

From the beginning, Constance Pittman made key contributions to endocrinology research and care.

“As a physician-scientist, Connie did pioneering work in thyroid physiology—important, interesting work that formed part of the knowledge base that we now utilize all the time in the clinic,” says Stuart Frank, M.D., director of the UAB Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolism. “She was a funded investigator for more than 30 years, and she contributed greatly to our knowledge of thyroid hormone biosynthesis and metabolism with nearly 70 full-length manuscripts on basic and clinical thyroidology and endocrinology.” Pittman also directed UAB’s Endocrine Training Program for nearly two decades.

“It can safely be said that Connie, along with her husband and a handful of other visionaries, built a fledgling medical school into the academic powerhouse that is now UAB,” Frank notes. “As such, they changed not only the medical landscape of their city, state, and region, but also the physical landscape of their community.”

Pittman’s dedication to care went beyond the lab and the clinic. “She participated in the public-health realm, which most of us don’t get the chance to do,” Frank says. A return visit to China inspired Pittman to become a leader in the fight against iodine deficiency, the world’s most prevalent and preventable cause of mental retardation. For many years, Pittman worked with Kiwanis International, the United Nations Children’s Fund, and the U.S. Fund for UNICEF to raise funds to eliminate iodine deficiency through salt iodization, testing, and monitoring—the easiest solution to the problem—in addition to community outreach and education. She served on the board of directors for the International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disease and had begun building an endowment to continue her work worldwide.



Above: Constance Pittman in her UAB laboratory in the 1980s.

Left: (Left to right) Constance and James Pittman with Charles “Scotty” McCallum Jr., circa 1976.



Honors and Inspiration

Pittman received many notable honors throughout her career. United States Representative Spencer Bachus nominated her to the National Library of Medicine as a Local Legend of Medicine. She also received the Kiwanis Club’s 2005 Andrew Gerow Hodges Service Award and the School of Medicine’s 1991 Distinguished Faculty Teaching Award and Best Teaching Clinical Professor Award. From 1971 to 1973, Pittman served as chief of the Thyroid Research Laboratory for the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

Constance Pittman passed away in January 2010, but her accomplishments continue to inspire her colleagues. “Connie was very special. They don’t make them that way too much any more,” Frank says. “I think few have had careers that, over so many years, have impacted so many people in different ways. On top of everything, she was a very nice person. I benefited personally from that at certain points in my career, and I wasn’t alone. We at UAB and in the endocrinology community locally and worldwide miss her greatly.”

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Student Rounds

THE HUMAN TOUCH

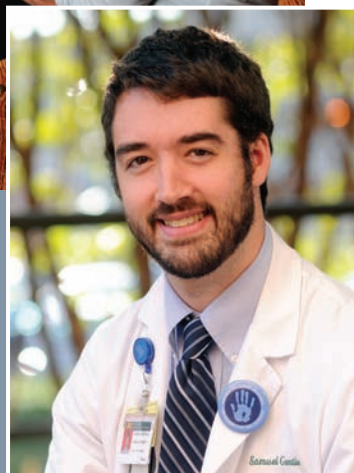
By Cara D. Clark

There are more ways to look at health care than through a microscope. While science makes up the majority of their curriculum, School of Medicine students also have opportunities to broaden their perspectives through four one-week Special Topics courses.

Last winter, students **Samuel Gentle**, **Forest Huls**, **Jaymee Nelson**, and **Rebekah Weil** took a Special Topics course dedicated to the medical humanities. Instructor and senior associate dean of medical education H. Hughes Evans, M.D., describes the course “as a way of talking about broader themes in medical education by using film, literature, and history. Our discussions revolved around work/life balance, the pressure to be perfect, stress, fatigue, financial pressures, and the role of humor.” After reading Raymond Carver’s thought-provoking short story “A Small, Good Thing,” the students reflected, via essay, on a redeeming real-life moment in their medical journeys. Here, they offer insights on the course, the essay, and the lasting impact of both.



Visits with a community elder inspired Jaymee Nelson (above) to write about the nuances of patient interactions. In his essay, Samuel Gentle (right) captured the challenge of balancing medical school with his love of music.



What were your expectations for the medical humanities course?

Nelson: I wanted a brief reminder of other aspects of medicine and to reflect on the first year and a half of medical school. I was interested in seeing how the process of medical education was expected to change us, and what other students thought about it.

Huls: I wanted to flex the parts of my brain I hadn’t used as much since making the jump from the humanities to the sciences.

Weil: I expected to watch movies and have a structured, formal discussion of the themes. It turned out to be a very open and relaxed forum, with the opportunity to candidly express our ideas about the films we watched, our own experiences in medicine, and our education.

Gentle: I expected the course to elicit self-reflection on exactly what I’m doing here, now, in medical school, and to help unearth my expectations for my future as a physician. School seems to make me lose sight of things at times, because my focus is often stolen by an upcoming exam or similar distractions.

Did the course surprise or challenge you?

Huls: It was interesting to see that mine isn’t the first generation or the only culture to question how to balance compassion and altruism with the human desire for status, material comfort, and renown. The 1965 Kurosawa film *Red Beard*, in which a young doctor struggles with resentment after being assigned to a hospital for the rural indigent rather than to the post of private physician to the shogun, could be perfectly reflective of 2010 by changing nothing but the names and settings.

Nelson: We watched a documentary that followed several medical students from the beginning of their education into their residencies and careers. Watching their experiences greatly impact basically every aspect of their

lives, then realizing we are going through the same process, was challenging.

Weil: I was surprised at how much freedom we had to talk about the things that affect us. We could be honest about our views, even those not very complimentary to the School of Medicine. The course challenged me to find a voice in my education and understand that I can shape my experience. I can decide what kind of student and physician I want to be, and achieve those goals even if they are not exactly the same goals that the school has for me.

How did you approach the essay?

Huls: The backdrop in Carver's story is the nightmare experienced by a couple whose injured child is fighting for life, and the "small, good thing" is an incident that injects some humanity and connectedness back into their alienated existence. I've never experienced anything so harrowing. The most alienating experience I've had since moving to Birmingham was orientation, finding myself surrounded by people who, for the most part, had been preparing themselves for medical school since junior high. I felt fairly out of place, but thankfully, my anxiety was eased by a humorous, essay-worthy discovery.

Nelson: My longest "patient" relationship was with a community elder. She appreciated our visits so much, which made it very easy to think of many small, good things in our encounters.

Weil: It is important to keep an open mind and provide services to our patients without judgment. I learned that lesson while getting to know heroin addicts when I was living and working in Washington, D.C., and I wanted to share my story.

Gentle: I had already formulated my small, good thing before I finished reading the story. These aren't moments you have to search your mind for. They are distinctly memorable.

What did the essay teach you about yourself?

Huls: Writing about the first few days of school helped me reconcile and consolidate my prematriculation and postmatriculation conceptions of myself. The first year of medical school is often considered a rite of passage, but it was impossible to think of it as such until I could write and edit my reminiscences down to their essentials. I came to think of myself as belonging here not as an outsider who sneaked in and managed to hang around, but instead as a full member of a club that neither my traditionally prepared classmates nor I belonged to before we got here.

Nelson: Taking time to write and reflect was helpful in processing patient encounters. I learned how easy it can be to overlook small, good things in patient encounters as well as opportunities to give a small, good thing to patients.

Weil: My essay is about finding humor in everyday life, even in difficult situations. It is also about getting to know people more than skin deep and making unlikely friends.

Gentle: Writing the piece helped me see how transforming a small moment can be—and how I should emphasize these moments just as much as the moments that feel less manageable. Additionally, I can't allow medicine—no matter how much I grow to love it—to choke off the things that give me balance.

Will this course have an influence on your medical career?

Weil: This course empowered me to take control of my medical education and shape my experience and career into whatever I want. I know that it is important to be proactive and maintain priorities for myself so that I end up with the career and the life that I want.

While the Special Topics courses are a required part of their curriculum, students can choose the subjects to explore. Here are a few selections from the most recent roster:

Old-Fashioned Doctoring: the Art and Science of Home Visits

The Physician's Role in Ending the Tobacco Epidemic

Wilderness Medicine

The Physician Executive

Hospice and Palliative Care

The Internet, Intellectual Property, and the Impact on the Future of Medical Research and Practice

Aeromedical Education: International and Long Range

Introduction to Autopsy

Huls: It was nice to reconnect to modes of thinking that sometimes feel out of place in medical school. I'll make sure to keep it up.

Gentle: The course was helpful in presenting reflection and writing as therapeutic tools for mental health maintenance, and I hope to continue writing in my future.

Nelson: By better understanding the process I am going through, seeing how it affected others, and realizing that it will affect me, I am prepared to anticipate these changes and not allow them to cloud why I originally wanted to be a doctor. Also, I hope to remember the message from "A Small, Good Thing," because without these moments, I know my career will be much less fulfilling.



Online Extra:

The students share their intriguing, humorous, and poignant essays inspired by "A Small, Good Thing."

Medicine.uab.edu/magazine

COMMENCEMENT 2010

The field of medicine gained 162 new physicians as the **class of 2010** celebrated its achievements at the Commencement ceremony, held May 16 at the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex. Robert R. Rich, M.D., former senior vice president and dean of the School of Medicine, presided over the ceremony, accompanied by some special guests. William L. Roper, M.D., M.P.H., a 1974 SOM graduate, dean of the School of Medicine and vice chancellor for medical affairs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and CEO of the UNC Health Care System, presented the keynote address. United States Surgeon General Regina Benjamin, M.D., M.B.A., a 1984 SOM alumna, also spoke to the graduates before they received their academic hoods and signed their names as doctors for the first time.

SCHOOLWIDE AWARDS

Hugh J. Dempsey Memorial Award

Presented for the highest academic achievement over the entire four years

Jayendrakumar Shantilal Patel

The Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Awards

Presented by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation for a student and faculty member

Joseph Tyler Fuqua
Jason R. Hartig Jr., M.D.



Alumni and new graduates, including featured speaker William Roper (right, at center), mingled at the School of Medicine brunch preceding Commencement.

Medical Assurance Award

Acknowledging excellence in patient communications for a senior completing postgraduate medical education in the state of Alabama

Virginia Logue Menendez
Cleon Louis Rogers IV

Award for Leadership and Community Service

Shelton Wiley Wright

William Boyd Medal for Excellence in Pathology

Caitlin Brianne Halverson

The Glasgow-Rubin Citation for Academic Achievement

Presented by the American Medical Women's Association to recognize female class members graduating in the top 10 percent of their class.

Victoria Shamblin Anderson
Jennifer Katherine Durst
Caitlin Brianne Halverson
Stefanie Lycans Riddle
Shannon Elizabeth Simpson
Inge Juljana Tamm-Daniels

Formal Academic Honors

The top 10th percentile of the class

Jayendrakumar Shantilal Patel, *summa cum laude*
Jumin Sunde, *summa cum laude*
William Charles Barrow, *magna cum laude*
Jennifer Katherine Durst, *magna cum laude*
Caitlin Brianne Halverson, *magna cum laude*
Scott Andrew Sarrels, *magna cum laude*



Jeffrey Campbell Thompson, *magna cum laude*
Timothy Alphonzo Williams, *magna cum laude*
Shelton Wiley Wright, *magna cum laude*
Victoria Shamblin Anderson, *cum laude*
Samuel Keener McElwee, *cum laude*
Brandon Allen Perry, *cum laude*
Stefanie Lycans Riddle, *cum laude*
Christopher Paul Roth, *cum laude*
Shannon Elizabeth Simpson, *cum laude*
Inge Juljana Tamm-Daniels, *cum laude*
Jonathan William Wright, *cum laude*

Alpha Omega Alpha

A national medical honor society recognizing scholarship and professional qualifications

Victoria Shamblin Anderson
William Charles Barrow
Nathan Michael Bullington
Jennifer Lauren Burgess
Jennifer Katherine Durst
Joseph Tyler Fuqua
Caitlin Brianne Halverson
Samuel Keener McElwee
Virginia Logue Menendez
Troy Elijah Mott
Jayendrakumar Shantilal Patel, president
Stephen Frederick Pehler
Brandon Allen Perry
Stefanie Lycans Riddle
Cleon Louis Rogers IV
Mark Edward Rogers
Christopher Paul Roth
Andrew Scott Sarrels
Rebekah Joy Savage
Kyle William Schuller
Shannon Elizabeth Simpson
Cosby Allen Stone Jr.
Jumin Sunde, vice president
Inge Juljana Tamm-Daniels
Jeffrey Campbell Thompson
Timothy Alphonzo Williams, vice president
Stephanie LeeAnn Wilson
Jonathan William Wright
Shelton Wiley Wright

The Gold Humanism Honor Society

Recognizes students who excel in clinical care, leadership, professionalism, compassion, patient care, and dedication to service as selected by their peers

Sejal Rajendra Amin
Rachel Kaylan Bramlett
Robert Stephen Briggs Jr.
Catherine Gentry Brooke
Nathan Michael Bullington
Jennifer Dudley Davidson
Joseph Tyler Fuqua
Walter Blake Gribben
Micah Amon Stan Howard
Holley Elizabeth Jeter
Rohini Khatri
Paul Lewis Linsky
Sanjay H. Maniar
Samuel Keener McElwee
Jonathan Gregory Meiman
Joshua York Menendez
Virginia Logue Menendez
Jayendrakumar Shantilal Patel
Caroline Magdy Ragheb
Cleon Louis Rogers IV
Matthew Justin Satcher
Shannon Elizabeth Simpson
Cosby Allen Stone Jr.
Shelton Wiley Wright
Stephen Andrew Wright

BIRMINGHAM CAMPUS AWARDS

The Dean's Award for Outstanding Performance in the Clinical Curriculum

Jennifer Katherine Durst

Achievement Awards

Recognizing superior achievement in the clinical curriculum

Jennifer Katherine Durst
Deidre Downs Gunn
Caitlin Brienne Halverson
Samuel Keener McElwee
Stephen Frederick Pehler
Cleon Louis Rogers IV
Shannon Elizabeth Simpson
Jumin Sunde
Stephanie LeeAnn Wilson
Shelton Wiley Wright

Battle S. Searcy Memorial Award in Psychiatry

Rosei Rocha Skipper

Bruce A. Harris Jr. Award in Obstetrics and Gynecology

Deidre Downs Gunn

American Academy of Neurology Prize

William Charles Barrow

Samuel Clements Little Award in Neurology

Jennifer Katherine Durst

Garber Galbraith Award for Excellence in Surgery

Jumin Sunde

G. Gayle Stephens Award in Family Medicine

Jonathan Gregory Meiman
Samuel Grey Tilden

Paul A. Pamisano Excellence in Pediatrics Award

Shelton Wiley Wright

Tinsley R. Harrison Award in Internal Medicine

Samuel Keener McElwee

Robert Goodloe McGahey Prize in Anesthesiology

Michael George Neimkin

Excellence in Emergency Medicine

Nima Bahraini

Robert J. Stanley Award in Radiology

Stephanie LeeAnn Wilson

Tinsley R. Harrison Medical Student Society

John Leatherbury Allen
Richard David Barrett
Rachael Kaylan Bramlett
Jennifer Dudney Davidson
Arthur Michael Dizon
Sean Patrick Haight
Holley Elizabeth Jeter
Jimmy Jinghua Jiang
Rohini Khatri
Julie Lauren Kiessling
Judit Maria Kuhn, secretary
Sanjay Haresh Maniar
Joshua York Menendez, president
Virginia Logue Menendez
Reid Austin Phillips, vice president
Shannon Elizabeth Simpson
Timothy Alphonzo Williams



Family, friends, and the members of the newly graduated class of 2010 enjoyed a reception after the Commencement ceremony.



Stephanie LeeAnn Wilson
ShuangQin Zhang
ShuangYin Zhang

HUNTSVILLE CAMPUS AWARDS

Dean's Award for Academic Excellence

Presented for excellence in the clinical clerkships
Jayendrakumar Shantilal Patel

Exemplary Academic Performance

Presented for the second highest in the clinical clerkships
Jeffrey Campbell Thompson

Dean's Leadership Award

Stefanie Lycans Riddle

G. Gayle Stephens Award in Family Medicine

Brandon Allen Perry

J. Ellis Sparks Award in Internal Medicine

Scott Andrew Sarrels
Cosby Allen Stone Jr.

John Di Placido Award in Obstetrics and Gynecology

Jamie Marie Bishop

John R. Montgomery Award in Pediatrics

Stefanie Lycans Riddle

Charles Selah Award in Surgery

Rohini Khatri

Award for Excellence in Psychiatry

Michelle McCurry Reeves

Award for Excellence in Neurology

Abeer Fareed Ahmed



Former senior vice president and dean Robert Rich and other SOM faculty recognized outstanding members of the class of 2010 at the Dean's Award Luncheon.

TUSCALOOSA CAMPUS AWARDS

Scholastic Achievement Award

Presented for the top performance in the clinical years
Timothy Alphonzo Williams

William R. Willard Award (Dean's Award)

Presented for outstanding contributions to the goals and missions of the College of Community Health Sciences
Dana Lytrice Todd

James H. Akers Memorial Award

Presented to the senior who best personifies both the art and the science of the practice of medicine as chosen by the graduating senior class
Terrence MacArthur Pugh

Robert F. Gloor Award in Community and Rural Medicine

Brent Gray Ballard

Family Medicine Award

Todd Bagwell Vaughan

William W. Winternitz Award in Internal Medicine

Timothy Alphonzo Williams

Finney/Akers Memorial Award in Obstetrics and Gynecology

Wesley Carroll Chambers

Pediatric Recognition Award

Catherine Gentry Brooke

Peter Bryce Award in Psychiatry

Bryant Keith Mahaffey
Matthew Justin Satcher

William R. Shamblin Surgery Award

Jonathan William Wright

Neurology Award

William Charles Barrow

Student Research Award

Brent Gray Ballard
Sara Lindsey Thurgood

Honor Roll

Montgomery Highlights Residents and Faculty

By W.J. Many Jr., M.D.

UAB Health Center Montgomery honored both residents and faculty at its annual graduation and awards ceremony, held June 22 at the Renaissance Hotel.

The event spotlighted eight graduating physicians who completed their internal-medicine training and three who completed a preliminary year of training: Frantzy Ceneus, M.D., who will practice in Gadsden, Ala.; Kalpana Gorthi, M.D., Sumana Kakivayi, M.D., and Sandeep Virk, M.D., who will remain in Montgomery; Shannon Heinrich, D.O., who will provide care in Moulton, Ala.; and Rak Patel, M.D., and Satish Sarvepalli, M.D., who will begin infectious disease fellowships at the Medical University of South Carolina and Ohio State University respectively.

Members of the faculty also were recognized for their service and teaching excellence. Narinder Bhalla, M.D., received the 2009-2010 Best Faculty Award; Rak Patel, M.D., earned the Tinsley Harrison Award for Best Resident of the Year; and I Am Resurreccion, M.D., received the Terry Hale Award for Best Intern of the Year.

Several members of the Health Center's Advisory Board attended the event, including Terry Davis, J.D.; Don Henderson, CEO of Jackson Hospital; Lynne Parker, CEO of Crossbridge Behavioral Health; and George Garzon. Other local medical leaders present included Cary Kuhlman, executive director of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama (MASA), Steven P. Furr, M.D., MASA president, and other academic and clinical faculty of the residency program.

Student Profile

Students in Service

By Doug Gillett

These days Jason Patten is most likely found in one of two places: in a classroom at the School of Medicine at UAB, or in the cockpit of an F-16 high above Alabama.

After six years of training and flying with the Air National Guard post in Montgomery, Patten began applying to medical schools in 2006. Now he's a third-year student living two of his childhood dreams at once—being a doctor and a fighter pilot. "It's a lot of work balancing everything, but it's worth it," he says. "I have no complaints."

The balancing act means that Patten sometimes must attend classes, then drive to Montgomery the same night to practice his dogfighting skills with fellow pilots. And regular deployments to the Middle East have challenged him to keep up with classes from 5,000 miles away.

Fortunately, Patten says, both UAB and the Pentagon have gone out of their way to help him manage his twin responsibilities. His SOM mentor—Sarah Nafziger, M.D., a professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine—worked with the Air Force to help coordinate his combat and research schedules. And the SOM's curriculum structure enabled Patten to participate in a number of research projects on the ground in Iraq.

Patten worked on studies of compartment syndrome and traumatic brain injury. "We were looking at the use of 3-percent saline, which is commonly used in head injuries," he explains. "But with IEDs exploding, this was the first time we were seeing high-impact, high-velocity trauma on a constant basis. We just don't have this kind of data in America, but in Iraq it happened twice a day."

Medical Commission

Meanwhile, fellow medical students Rozalyn and Scott Love have faced their own balancing act—military service, medical school, and a marriage. They were commissioned as naval officers in April 2007 and started SOM classes just three months later.

Rozalyn says they were attracted to military service by the adventure, but also by



Jason Patten (left) and Scott and Rozalyn Love are three of approximately 20 SOM students serving in the military in some capacity.

its opportunities for both health care and public policy. (Both she and Scott earned master's degrees at UAB's School of Public Health.) Like Patten, they've been helped by professors and commanding officers who have tried to make their experience as seamless as possible.

Thanks to the Navy Health Professions Scholarship Program, the Loves have been able to concentrate on their SOM coursework during the school year and serve their active-duty time during the summer. After their first year, they attended a five-week officer development program in Rhode Island; the next year, they spent the summer doing research at Naval Medical Center San Diego.

Scott says they may return to San Diego for their residency. "The Navy doesn't do an official couples match, but they mostly try to keep you together, so I'm pretty confident we'll be together for at least the first year," he says. "After that, our paths may

diverge a bit, but we knew that was a risk."

Following their residencies, the Loves will owe the Navy four years of active service—no minor commitment, but one that Rozalyn describes as preferable to graduating with hundreds of thousands of dollars in student-loan debt. Even more important than the financial considerations, though, is the sense of serving one's country.

Rozalyn says she felt that acutely when she met with her great-great-uncle, a World War II veteran, just days after graduating from officer training. "We walked into the room, and he summoned the strength to push himself up out of his wheelchair to stand and give us our first salute. He passed away very shortly after that, and we got to present the flag to his family at his military funeral," she recalls. "You just don't appreciate the sacrifices that a lot of our forefathers have made until you tell them you're joining the service."

FIRST STEPS TOWARD THE FUTURE

The Class of 2014 Gets an Early Start

By Charles Buchanan

Before the School of Medicine's fall semester began, the 176 members of the class of 2014 were already hard at work. They started in late July by meeting a cancer survivor and rheumatoid arthritis patient who both spoke candidly about their health-care experiences. Team-building activities were next on the agenda, followed by a special course—Patient, Doctor, and Society—that explores the roles and responsibilities of physicians, ethics, compassion, professionalism, and the doctor/patient relationship. By mid-August, the students were ready for the highly anticipated White Coat Ceremony, the traditional rite marking the beginning of medical training.



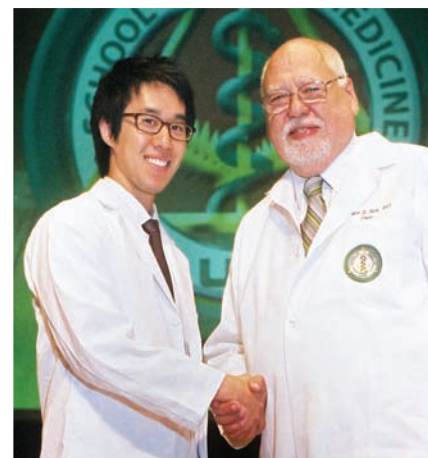
Thomas Moody, M.D. (above), was one of three alumni presented with a Role Model Award at the White Coat Ceremony. (See page 32 for more on the Role Model Awards.)



During the White Coat Ceremony, Jason Hartig, M.D. (far right photo, standing at left), UAB associate professor of medicine and the winner of the 2010 Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award, as chosen by the class of 2010, spoke to the new students. The first-year students also recited an oath of commitment to patient care.



The Medical Alumni Association presented the class of 2014 (below) with their white coats, which symbolize professional competence and human compassion.



Class Profile

- 101 men, 75 women
- 23.3 average age
- 30.6 average MCAT score
- 85.8 percent from Alabama; 13 states represented
- 62 undergraduate institutions represented
- Top majors: biology, biomedical science, chemistry, biochemistry, chemical engineering, psychiatry
- 19 students with multiple majors
- 7 M.D./Ph.D. students; 6 M.D./M.P.H. students
- 16 students entering rural medicine programs





Students enjoyed the opportunity to get to know each other at the Welcome Back Party, co-sponsored by the Medical Alumni Association.



The Counselor Education Program in UAB's School of Education developed team-building challenges to help prepare the new medical students for collaboration in education, research, and care.

Five from '14

Who are the members of the class of 2014? They are accomplished scientists and caregivers, and they are serious scholars. Many are world travelers. They come from diverse backgrounds and are active in their communities. They also have big ideas and ambitious goals, and all are ready to get to work. Meet five students who represent the high caliber of the class:

- **Aimen Ismail** spent her final undergraduate semester in the west African nation of Ghana, far from her hometown of Hoover, Ala. There she participated in a public health internship working with HIV-positive individuals, which strengthened her resolve to save lives and resources through preventive measures and increased access to health care. The UAB graduate also has conducted cancer metastasis research and helped tutor adults hoping to earn their GEDs. Ismail received the Drs. Seydi V. and Gonul Aksut Endowed Medical Scholarship, the Leisa Chambliss Endowed Medical Scholarship, the Harriet P. Dustan Scholarship, and the James Earl Robertson Medical Scholarship; she says, "the fact that these donors have made this investment in me will propel me to be the most responsible physician possible. I am indebted to them and will pay off this debt throughout my career through service to others."



- **Danuel Laan** once lived on a Bluebird bus. But the challenges of his childhood inspired him to seek answers about medicine's ability to improve life, particularly for underserved patients. That led to a degree from UAB, three years of hospital work, 500 hours of shadowing physicians, and becoming the first student to serve on the Alabama Rural Health Association board of directors. Laan plans to start or join a practice near his hometown of Ider, Ala., and continue shaping health policy. He says he will be able to focus on developing patient-care skills thanks to the support he has received through the S. Richardson Hill Scholarship, the Dr. Seaborn W. Purifoy and Daisy Brown Purifoy Memorial Scholarship, and the Dr. Marcus Skinner Memorial Scholarship.



- **Brian May** got an entirely new education after graduating from the University of Tennessee. Through Teach for America, he taught science at a low-income middle school in a Latino neighborhood. That experience helped inspire him to enter UAB's M.D./M.P.H. program and work toward his goal of opening a community clinic that partners with schools to provide health education and improve access to health services. May, a resident of Chattanooga, Tenn., was named an SOM Dean's Scholar. He appreciates the scholarship because it reduces debt worries and allows him "to be free to pursue my true interests and passion."



- **Joanna Maya** plans to combine clinical medicine and research as a primary care physician. She already has a head start; as an undergraduate at Birmingham-Southern College, she won an award to present her findings on pancreatic cancer at the American Association for Cancer Research annual meeting. The Birmingham native also has volunteered as a Spanish-English interpreter at Cooper Green Mercy Hospital and worked with the Exceptional Foundation, which serves mentally and physically challenged individuals. Maya, who received both a School of Medicine Scholarship and Diversity Scholarship, says the support will help her "focus on becoming the best physician I can be."



- **Okechukwu Mgbemena**, from Imo State in southern Nigeria, credits a Google search of American universities with leading him to the University of Alabama. There he studied chemistry and conducted research on DNA repair proteins and therapeutic glycosides. He also tutored other students; participated in community service projects in science education and health care; and conducted research on cancer drug-delivery systems with the Alabama Institute of Manufacturing Excellence. Mgbemena was awarded the Diversity Scholarship, a School of Medicine Scholarship, and the Mineral District Medical Society and Auxiliary Endowed Scholarship. All three will help relieve the financial stress of medical school and "allow me to focus on the most important thing: understanding the scientific and humanitarian aspects of medicine," he says.



Tuscaloosa Report

Student Health Makes Statewide Impact

By Leslie Zganjar

For more than three decades, the College of Community Health Sciences at the University of Alabama has educated and trained medical students and resident physicians to care for the people of the state. Today, the college is supplementing the ranks of these health-care providers by teaching students across campus about healthier lifestyles—and how to be partners in Alabama's health when they graduate.

The Student Health Center's Department of Health Promotion and Wellness spearheads the activities. The center is part of the college, which is the Tuscaloosa branch campus of the School of Medicine.

By providing health education to students, the Department of Health Promotion and Wellness complements the Student Health Center's traditional practice of medicine. The department's staff includes professional health educators and a registered dietitian who work closely with campus stakeholders to address state and national health issues that might affect University of Alabama students.

However, the work does not stop there. Through strategic health teams and the peer-educator program Project Health, the department integrates students into its efforts. As a result, students learn to become partners in their own health as well as health educators and advocates for their peers and, ultimately, the communities where they will one day live.

Seven strategic health teams address issues such as alcohol and drugs, tobacco, nutrition, eating disorders, mental health, financial health, and healthy relationships and sexual health. The campuswide teams, whose members include Department of Health Promotion and Wellness staff, meet monthly during the academic year to recommend prevention and intervention strategies and to develop health-promotion activities for students.

Department staff also serve as advisors to Project Health, a student organization that provides peer support and education



The Student Health Center's Department of Health Promotion and Wellness team includes (left to right) Michelle Harcrow, assistant director for health promotion; Margaret Garner, R.D., director; Sheena Quzon, assistant director for health education and nutrition; and Delynn Wilcox, assistant director for health planning and prevention.

about health issues important to college students. Project Health members learn to become peer educators and provide students with information that encourages healthy lifestyle choices. Peer educators also can take a for-credit course, Health and Wellness Advocacy, to prepare for certification as peer instructors.

Health education and advocacy are critical in Alabama, where a high percentage of the state's population suffers from heart disease, stroke, and cancer, the most prevalent but also the most preventable of chronic health conditions. If students learn to live healthy lives, they can serve as health partners in their future communities and help improve the overall health of Alabama, says college Dean E. Eugene Marsh, M.D.

"The University of Alabama is educating young bankers, teachers, and lawyers who, if we do our job at the Student Health Center and college, can go out as health-care advocates and understand what it means to be a partner in their health and the health of their communities," Marsh says.

The concept is a powerful one and consistent with the guiding principles of the American College Health Association, according to Heather Zesiger, chair of the national association's Health Promotion Section.

"What Alabama is doing—training students and matching it intentionally to what the state needs—is powerful," Zesiger says. "The University of Alabama has really wrapped itself around the concept of enhancing the collective health of communities."

Margaret Garner, R.D., the college's assistant dean for health education and outreach, directs the work of the Department of Health Promotion and Wellness. She says the department hopes that "students leave the University of Alabama not only prepared to be productive and to excel in their chosen vocations, but also well prepared to live their lives in optimal health because of what they learned here, and that their future communities will be better for it as well."

Huntsville Report

Immunization Awards Benefit Patients

By Ralph C. Samlowski, M.D., Associate Professor of Family Medicine

The UAB Huntsville Family Medicine Residency Program has been selected for a 2010 American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation (AAFP) Pfizer Immunization Award in the category of best practices. These awards recognize family medicine residency programs that have achieved excellence in clinical practice by developing creative solutions that result in increased immunization rates in their communities. The UAB Huntsville Family Medicine Center received the best practices award by implementing a system to achieve high immunization rates in medically underserved children ages 19 to 35 months during the specified 12-month period.

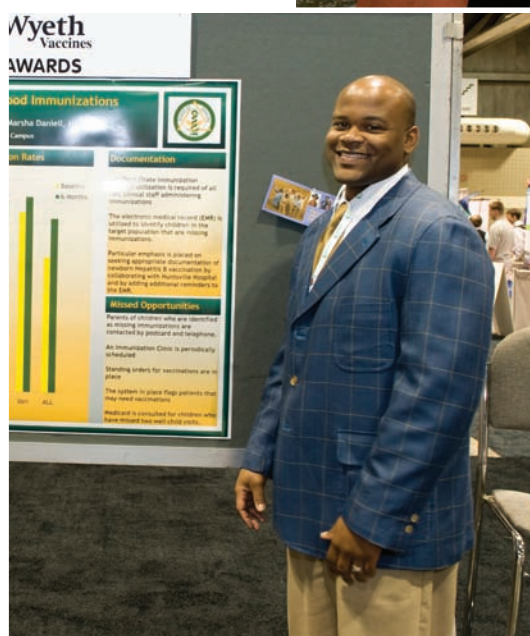
The program received a \$10,000 monetary award and a \$1,000 scholarship to send senior resident Duriel Gray, M.D., to the July 2010 AAFP National Conference for Family Medicine Residents and Medical Students in Kansas City. The new award is in addition to a \$10,000 AAFP grant the Huntsville family medicine program received last year to implement the program.

The Family Medicine Center created education packets for parents of patients up to 18 months old. The packets included colorful booklets listing benefits of immunization along with risks, precautions, and side effects. All physicians, as well as patient-care and teaching areas, were provided with child and adult immunization schedules, and medical staff received regular updates and education. The center also sent postcards to parents of children with missing immunizations and held an immunization clinic to encourage visits.

"Thanks to immunizations, deadly diseases like smallpox and polio no longer kill or disable millions. Getting our children immunized at the right time protects them and improves the health of our community," says Richard G. Roberts, M.D., J.D., president of the AAFP Foundation. "I would like to offer my congratulations to the winners of this year's awards. We hope the innovative systems put in place by these residency programs will inspire other physicians and their practice teams to improve their immunization efforts, too."

As a teacher and clinician in the UAB Huntsville Family Medicine Center, I can say firsthand that this program has made a major impact on our office, on our staff, on our patients, and on our learners,

residents, and medical students. For the past year, immunizations have been a major focus of every practice meeting where residents, staff, and faculty all get together. Because of our program's participation in this immunization grant, our office staff now feels well educated about immunizations, including who gets them and when they are supposed to get them. Our staff also feels empowered to remind patients and physicians about every opportunity to catch up on missed immunizations. This initiative has been a great opportunity for all of us to work together for the good of our patients.



Top: Huntsville residency program director Mary Crestani, M.D., accepts the award for best practices.

Bottom left: Duriel Gray, M.D., presents the immunization project results at the AAFP national conference.

Bottom right: Immunization handouts created for patients

{ From the Development Office }

A Vision of Hope

Brain Tumor Survivor Supports Research

By Tyler Greer

In May 2008, Bill Cash was having vision problems. Today, his vision is clear: He wants to help patients with brain tumors. “Our goal is to raise \$5 million in the next four years,” he says. “The money will be available to the UAB neuro-oncology program to promote research that we hope will extend life expectancy and find a cure for this deadly form of cancer.”

After visiting his optometrist and UAB neuro-ophthalmologists that May, Cash learned that he had glioblastoma multiforme (GBM), the most aggressive malignant brain tumor. GBM survival rates are poor—only about half of patients survive more than one year after diagnosis, and only a quarter survive after two years.

Surgery followed in June, performed by UAB neurosurgery director James Markert, M.D. A biopsy confirmed the tumor as a grade four glioblastoma. A regimen of chemotherapy and radiation came next. Then,

in September 2009, MRI images showed no evidence of a tumor. Cash remains cancer-free two years after his diagnosis, creating an opportunity he doesn’t intend to let slip away.

Cash sold his pharmacy-management company to a group of investors in 2009 and directed his resources and energies to help UAB scientists find ways to help others survive brain tumors. After consulting with his UAB neurologists, Burt Nabors, M.D., and Hassan Fathallah-Shaykh, M.D., Ph.D., he—along with family and friends—created the Gaining Life Initiative (GLI) Foundation. GLI presented its first research grant of \$100,000 to UAB this April.

Cash plans to collaborate with foundations with similar goals and spread the word about his efforts through his professional relationships within the pharmaceutical and health-care industries. GLI is a 501(c)(3) foundation, making all donations tax-deductible.

“The Department of Neurology and Division of Neuro-Oncology are extremely grateful to Mr. Cash and his family for their commitment to finding new treatments and a cure for GBM,” says Tom Brannan, senior director of development for the Department of Neurology. “Philanthropic support plays a major role in advancing novel research, which leads to important discoveries. Mr. Cash’s financial support, positive attitude, and strength through adversity provide great encouragement to the physicians and scientists at UAB researching GBM.”



Bill Cash

Acting Against Cancer

Cancer Center Highlights New Screening Law

By Lisa C. Bailey

UAB donors and supporters joined the celebration on May 19 as the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center marked the signing of legislation to create cancer-screening programs that could save thousands of lives.

Cancer Center Director Edward Partridge, M.D., president of the American Cancer Society (ACS) National Board of Directors, and state Representative Paul DeMarco were featured speakers. DeMarco authored the new act after working with Partridge, ACS representatives, the University of South Alabama, and others to host the 2009 Alabama Cancer Summit.

The law gives the Alabama Department of Public Health statutory authority for breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer-screening pro-

grams. Experts say the expansion of such programs benefits everyone, especially the medically underserved and the uninsured. The act also aims to raise public awareness about cancer prevention and detection as a cost-effective health measure and formalizes the collection and study of data on breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer prevention and incidence.

An estimated 22,000 new cancer cases occurred in Alabama last year, with nearly 10,000 people dying from the disease. “It is tragic when cancer causes the loss of a life, and it’s completely unnecessary when upward of 70 percent of all cancer deaths can be prevented through screening and early detection,” Partridge said, thanking the academic, legislative, public health, business, and nonprofit



State Representative Paul DeMarco, Edward Partridge, and state Rep. Mary Sue McClurkin mark the law’s passage.

leaders who advocated for the law.

The Cancer Center uses philanthropic dollars to fund research, help recruit physician-scientists and cancer specialists, and provide services and support to cancer patients. One goal is to help eliminate the health disparities in the poverty-stricken areas of the deep South. The bill signing, Partridge says, is another step in that direction.

A Drive to Discover

Endowed Fund Honors Neurology Pioneer

By Lisa C. Bailey

The growth of the UAB Department of Neurology is inextricably linked with the accomplishments—and dedication—of Shin J. Oh, M.D., distinguished professor of neurology and director of the EMG Laboratory and the Division of Neuromuscular Disease. The creation of the Shin J. Oh Endowed Support Fund in Neurology will honor his years of service, with a goal of growing the fund to the level of an endowed professorship and, ultimately, an endowed chair.

“During his many years at UAB, Shin Oh has proven to be a leader and true pioneer in neuromuscular research,” says Ray Watts, M.D., senior vice president and dean of the School of Medicine and former neurology chair. “His tireless work ethic and strong desire to improve the lives of patients with neuromuscular diseases has been an inspiration to his colleagues and the many students he has mentored.”

Oh came to UAB in 1970. His interest in the diagnosis and treatment of neuromuscular diseases led to the establishment of the UAB EMG Laboratory, the Muscle and Nerve Histopathology Laboratory, and the Division of Neuromuscular Disease. Under Oh’s direction, the nationally accredited clinical neurophysiology residency program, established in 1996, has trained more than 40 neurologists. He also has instructed several hundred neurology residents and numerous international scholars in the diagnosis and treatment of neuromuscular diseases.

Oh has published more than 200 scholarly papers, authored several textbooks that have become standard resources in his field, and helped establish UAB as a neuromuscular disease referral center for physicians from the southeastern United States and several foreign countries. He has contributed significantly to the practice of neurology in his home country

of Korea by enabling many of its young neurologists to study at UAB. In 2006, Oh received the Distinguished Researcher award from the American Association of Neuromuscular and Electrodiagnostic Medicine, one of his profession’s highest honors.

Together with his wife, M. Kim Oh, M.D., and with gifts from former fellows and grateful patients, Oh has helped establish endowed lectureships that bring world-renowned clinicians and researchers to UAB twice a year.

Every spring, Oh presents his graduating residents and fellows with autographed copies of one of his books. Inside they find inscribed the following words, reminding them that “the wisest man has something yet to learn.”

To contribute to the Oh endowed support fund, contact Tom Brannan at tbrannan@uab.edu or (205) 975-7240.



Shin J. Oh

A Winning Hand

MHRC Young Professionals Raise Funds to Fight Childhood Obesity

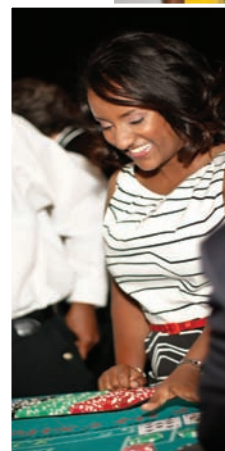
By Lisa C. Bailey

The Young Professionals Board of the UAB Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center (MHRC) went “all in” on Casino Royale, presented by Balch and Bingham. The public event, held June 4 at Birmingham’s WorkPlay, featured celebrity dealers (including Birmingham Mayor William Bell, Robert Kelly of Kelly Construction Company, Bettina Boateng from NBC-13, Yenu Wodajo from ABC 33/40, Mary K from 95.7 Jamz, Cedric Sparks from the Birmingham Division of Youth Services, and Chris Davis from the online show *View of the City*), live entertainment, door prizes, and a silent auction.

The event raised more than \$56,000 for the Healthy Happy Kids program, a free, six-

session curriculum designed to help reduce and prevent childhood obesity. It targets underserved children attending after-school programs in inner-city elementary schools, teaching them about the food pyramid and calorie balance along with hands-on, practical lessons about preparing healthy foods. The students also learn easy, fun interactive games that promote and stress the importance of daily physical activity. Plans call for implementing the program in after-school-care programs across the city and state as funding becomes available.

“Our Young Professionals Board has put a great deal of time and effort into organiz-



Above: Delores Simmons, Joi Scott, Chay and Donald Watkins, Tameka Wren, Diandra Debrosse, and Stephanie Mays
Left: Yenu Wodajo

ing this event and ensuring its success,” says MHRC director Mona Fouad, M.D. “We are grateful to these young leaders for their motivation and dedication in raising funds for this important program. Through their support, they are helping to give the next generation of leaders the chance to live healthier, happier lives.”

Support for Survival

Estes Chair Strengthens Cancer Efforts

By Josh Till and Lisa C. Bailey

Retired Tuscaloosa businessman and lung cancer survivor James Estes is known for his commitment to funding cancer cures. Now his generosity has enabled the University of Alabama System Board of Trustees to approve the creation of the James H. Estes Family Endowed Chair for Lung Cancer Research at the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Estes donated \$1.5 million to establish the endowed chair, enabling UAB to support an exceptional researcher, academician, and clinician who will further the Cancer Center's research efforts in lung cancer and help provide better treatments while searching for a cure. He also has provided a gift to establish the James H. Estes Family Lung Cancer Research Sponsored Support Fund, which will expand the center's scientific studies on the disease.

Estes and his family have contributed to other UAB cancer initiatives, including the Estes Research Fund for Ovarian Cancer. In 2006, another generous donation helped the Cancer Center launch Courage Companions, a free, one-on-one support network that pairs cancer survivors with current patients and their caregivers. It is the only program of its kind in Alabama, and enrollment is open to any cancer patient in the Southeast.

The founder of Estes Nursing Home

System, Estes is a past president of the Alabama Nursing Home Association and appointee to the Alabama Senior Service Board.

He also served as a member of the finance committee of the American Nursing Home Association.

"The UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center is extremely grateful to Mr. Estes for all of his support, which will allow us to move our lung cancer research programs to the next level," says Cancer Center director Edward Partridge, M.D.

Robert J. Cerfolio, M.D., has been appointed to the James H. Estes Family Endowed Chair for Lung Cancer Research. Cerfolio joined the faculty of the UAB Department of Surgery in 1996 and serves as professor and section chief of thoracic surgery in the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery. The recipient of numerous awards and honors, Cerfolio has been a visiting professor in hospitals around the world.

"I am truly honored and blessed to hold the endowed chair that bears the name of Mr.



Left: Robert Cerfolio and James Estes

Below: Pat and James Estes



Estes and his family," Cerfolio says. "They have long been faithful supporters of UAB. We plan on using his very generous gift to support and improve our many clinical research projects on the preoperative, intraoperative, and postoperative care of patients with lung cancer."

In Gear | *Fins, Fenders, and Fun Drives Liver Center Efforts*

By Lisa C. Bailey

Hueytown, Alabama, racing legend Bobby Allison took the lead at the Talladega Superspeedway on April 17—in a race to raise funds for the UAB Liver Center. The second annual Fins, Fenders, and Fun showcased Alabama's prominence in NASCAR racing and also the research efforts of the center's team, led by director Joseph Bloomer, M.D., toward the treatment and cure of liver diseases. The benefit raised more than \$150,000.

Emceed by Rick Karle of Fox 6 News, the event featured music by Chevy 6, food by the Fish Market, one-of-a-kind collectible cars from the MOB Inc. Car Club, and a live auction. The premier auction item was the NASCAR Need for Speed package: a shotgun ride with Bobby Allison around the Talladega Superspeedway, a Bobby Allison-autographed 1969 Mercury Cyclone collectible car, and two Sprint Cup series tickets to the Aaron's

“Continued support allows the center to expand research and improve the quality of patient care.”

—Joseph Bloomer

499. Other auction items included a luxury Bertolucci women's wristwatch, two golf and tennis packages at Willow Point on Lake Martin, a Low Country boil for 150 people catered by the Fish Market and Chef George

Brain Trust

Bevill Symposium Attracts Glial Biology Experts

By Lisa C. Bailey

Glial cells could be considered the traffic cops of the brain. Recent research suggests that they help direct the supply of nutrients and oxygen to the brain and spinal cord, guide the migration of immature neurons in the embryonic brain, enable communication among neurons, and help trigger immune response in the nervous system, among other tasks. They may even play a part in learning and memory.

Understanding glial health is one key to preventing and treating neurological disease, and it was the focus of the 2010 Bevill Symposium, hosted by the UAB Center for Glial Biology in Medicine and Comprehensive Neuroscience Center on December 5-7 at the Doubletree Hotel in Birmingham. The event is made possible by the generous support of the family of Congressman Tom Bevill.

Scientists from across the nation and world attended the conference to discuss topics ranging from glial vascular interactions, central nervous system immunity, and neurological disease to glia axonal interactions and the role of glia in development. UAB speakers included Steve Carroll, M.D., Ph.D. professor of neuropathology; Candace Floyd, Ph.D., assistant

professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation; Burt Nabors, M.D., professor of neurology; Vladimir Parpura, M.D., associate professor of neurobiology; Lucas Pozzo-Miller, Ph.D., professor of neurobiology; Anne Theibert, Ph.D., associate professor of neurobiology; Jacques Wadiche, Ph.D., assistant professor of neurobiology; and Linda Wadiche, Ph.D., assistant professor of neurobiology.

The late Tom Bevill, a member of the United States House of Representatives from 1967 to 1997, was often referred to as "Alabama's third senator" because he supported not only his district but the entire state as well. His contributions to UAB enabled the establishment of the Center for Nuclear Imaging Research, and the Bevill Biomedical Research Building was named for him in 1992.

"I am truly grateful to the Bevill family for supporting this symposium, which provides an excellent forum for leading researchers from UAB and across the nation to present the latest advances in their scientific studies," says Ray L. Watts,



Above left: The Bevill Biomedical Research Building
Above: The 2009 Bevill Symposium attracted scientists from across the country.

M.D., senior vice president and dean of the School of Medicine. "This event highlights the tremendous research taking place in the neurosciences at UAB and around the country, and it provides a stage on which to share this research with other scientists. Congressman Bevill was a visionary leader who served the state of Alabama and UAB through his commitment to helping Alabama become a leader in education and the sciences. I believe this annual symposium will keep his vision alive."

Sarris, and a limousine ride for eight to a progressive dinner at three of Chef Frank Stitt's restaurants.

"The success of this event is made possible by the generosity of our sponsors and community patrons," Bloomer says. "Their continued support, which we greatly appreciate, allows the center to expand research, recruit new members to the Liver Center, improve the quality of patient care, and increase liver disease education."



Left: June and Bobby Allison with Rosemarie, Vincent, and Vince Bruno
Below left: Joseph Bloomer and Gene Davenport



Below: Tracey Gwaltney and Tom Fisher

Model Behavior

Awards Highlight Community Service

By Caperton Gillett

The white coat carries with it the responsibility to act with professionalism and compassion. And on August 15, at the White Coat Ceremony, the future physicians of the class of 2014 learned how to wear it well.

During the event, the Medical Alumni Association presented the Martha Myers Role Model Awards to three alumni who have dedicated their careers to serving their communities. The accolades are named for the late Martha C. Myers, M.D., a 1971 School of Medicine graduate who spent 25 years in Yemen providing care in hospitals and prisons, teaching nursing, and helping to direct UNICEF's immunization program.

Jack Blackwell, M.D.

An Etowah County native, Jack Blackwell served in the Navy for two years following high school and worked as a brick mason to support himself as an undergraduate at the University of Alabama. After receiving his diploma from the Medical College of Alabama in 1960, Blackwell worked in Centre, Alabama, as a family physician and obstetrician. Thirty-four years later, he left private practice to become medical director of the emergency room at Cherokee Baptist Medical Center.

Blackwell worked to promote the practice of community-focused medicine, serving as mentor to medical students and residents. Upon his passing in 2008, the Alabama House of Representatives recognized his service with a resolution calling him a "valuable and beloved member of the community" whose "memory will be forever treasured."

Sara Crews Finley, M.D.

After earning a biology degree from the University of Alabama, Sara Crews Finley entered the Medical College of Alabama, where she received her M.D. degree in 1955. She returned to the Birmingham medical center in 1966 to establish the first cytogenetics laboratory in the Southeast along with her husband, Wayne H. Finley, M.D.

Since then, she has served as co-director of the Laboratory of Medical Genetics (with her husband) and has taken on teaching roles in pediatrics, genetics, and epidemiology.

Finley has contributed to the development of medical genetics at international symposia, on national committees for health and genetic testing, and in local professional and civic organizations. In 1990, she became the first female president of the Jefferson County



Above: (left to right) R. Bob Mullins, Sara Crews Finley, Thomas Moody, Mrs. Jack Blackwell, and Medical Alumni Association President Theodis Buggs Jr.



Left: Members of the class of 2014 celebrate after the White Coat Ceremony.

Medical Society. Now a professor emerita at the School of Medicine, Finley has received numerous honors and awards and been inducted into the Alabama Healthcare Hall of Fame.

Thomas E. Moody, M.D.

Thomas E. Moody graduated from the School of Medicine in 1973, and he has worked as a urologist in Birmingham since 1976, serving as president of the Urology Centers of Alabama from 2000 to 2008. He also has published numerous articles and abstracts in professional journals.

Moody has pursued a personal mission to improve Alabama's grade for prostate cancer care and mortality, offering free prostate screenings throughout the Black Belt and encouraging colleagues to do the same. He also has played an essential role in drafting the state's Prostate Cancer Screening Bill, signed into law in 2007. For his work, Moody has received honors from the Black Belt Action Committee, the Alabama Senate, and the National Prostate Cancer Coalition, which called him "a major presence in the battle against prostate cancer in Alabama."

Face Forward

Medical Alumni Network on Facebook

By Caperton Gillett

The Medical Alumni Association is looking for a few good friends. Its Facebook group (search for “UASOM Medical Alumni Association” to find it) now includes more than 500 members representing different classes, but there’s always room for more, says MAA interim director Meredith Burns. “We encourage alumni to stay in touch with us through Facebook,” she says. “It’s just the way people communicate now—and it’s an easier, faster way to share information.”

Noble Anderson, M.D., a 1989 graduate, created the Facebook group, which enables members to join discussions on the Wall, post photos, and interact with the MAA and each other. “Social networking has become more common over the years, and we wanted to increase our exposure to more of the graduates,” he says.

“For community building, Facebook is wonderful,” Anderson adds, noting the network’s ability to link alumni all over the world. “I’ve reconnected with a lot of college, medical school, and residency

friends.” And while it’s no surprise that younger alumni and current medical students have eagerly joined the group, Anderson says that older alumni, including several retired physicians, are active members as well. “Anything to enhance our communication among our peers is a good thing,” he says. “Just as with any medical or surgical treatment, we want to be innovative.”



Burns says that the Facebook page and MAA Web site (www.alabamamedicalalumni.org) are becoming increasingly important channels for connecting the organization with alumni. “We can share information in the blink of an eye,” she says. Electronic communication also helps reduce costs. “Our ultimate goal is to be better stewards of the members’ donations and fees,” Burns adds.

Warm Reception

Birmingham Alumni Meet Dean Watts

By Charles Buchanan

School of Medicine alumni in the Birmingham area welcomed senior vice president and dean Ray L. Watts, M.D., at an October 12 reception. During the event, hosted by the Medical Alumni Association and the School of Medicine at UAB’s Alys Stephens Center, Watts shared his vision for and excitement about the future of the school. He also discussed the forthcoming strategic plans for research, education, and primary care and encouraged alumni to become involved in their development and implementation.

Clockwise from right: Sara Crews Finley and Wayne Finley with Ray and Nancy Watts; UAB President Carol Garrison, Ray Watts, and Theodis Buggs Jr.; Ray Watts and Albert Tully



Alumni Weekend Preview

The University of Alabama Medical Alumni Association (MAA) has released the schedule for the 38th Annual Medical Alumni Weekend, which will be held February 18-19, 2011. The annual event will highlight alumni accomplishments and offer opportunities for alumni to reconnect with the school and each other. Look for additional information about Medical Alumni Weekend in the mail (if you are an MAA member) or online at alabama-medicalalumni.org, and be sure to reserve your spot early.

Unless noted, all events will take place at the Birmingham Marriott. Speakers will be announced soon.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18

- 4:00 p.m.** 32nd Annual Reynolds Historical Lecture, Lister Hill Library
- 6:00 p.m.** Hospitality Room opens

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19

- 8:00 a.m.** CME
- 12:30 p.m.** 19th Annual Constance S. and James A. Pittman Lecture/Luncheon
- 2:00 p.m.** Meet and greet with Dean Ray Watts
- 6:00 p.m.** Alumni Reception
- 7:30 p.m.** Class Reunion Dinners for the classes of 1946, 1947, 1951, 1956, 1958, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1965, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2006



Paying It Forward

Class of '66 Offers a Helping Hand

By Caperton Gillett

Times certainly have changed for medical students since 1966, particularly when it comes to tuition. "When I went to medical school, the tuition was \$200," says John Poynor, M.D. "Today, in-state tuition for the School of Medicine is \$20,680. It costs to be educated."

Poynor and his colleagues from the class of 1966 have come together to help incoming medical students who are facing the pressures of paying a high tuition in the current financial climate. At its 25th reunion, the class made a commitment to raise funds for a scholarship. "In recognition of that reunion, we set a goal to create a corpus that will generate enough income every year to support at least one student," says Poynor, the organizer of the effort.

The class plans to accelerate its fund-raising when it meets for its 45th reunion at the next Medical Alumni Weekend in February 2011. A class brunch is scheduled for February 20. Poynor hopes that his classmates will be generous and contribute \$1,000 each. "At our age, all of the kids are out of the house, we don't have tuition, and we don't have weddings," he says. "In these financial times, the corpus needs to be bigger than you would think to generate sufficient return. So we need lots of money in order to help these students."

Class Notes and Memorials

Follow the lives and careers of your classmates on the Medical Alumni Association Web site at www.alabamamedicalalumni.org. Just click the "Class Notes" link on the home page.

Share your own accomplishments by sending updates to office@alabamamedicalalumni.org. You can also fax them to (205) 975-7299.

Hall of Honor

Healthcare Hall of Fame Inducts Alumni

By Charles Buchanan

Alabama's list of health care legends just got a little longer. At a ceremony in Montgomery on May 8, the Alabama Healthcare Hall of Fame inducted two School of Medicine alumni among its 14 new members:

• **Ronald E. Henderson, M.D. '62**, is an obstetrics and gynecology specialist who became an influential member of the Alabama State Committee of Public Health. He helped reorganize the state public health department into districts and championed the Alabama Nurse Midwife Act. Today he is a clinical professor at the School of Medicine at UAB.

• **John R. Wheat, M.D.**

'76, M.P.H., is professor of community and rural medicine at the University of Alabama College of Community Health Sciences. For many years, he has worked closely with the School of Medicine at UAB to direct the rural scholars program, which is designed to increase the number of physicians for underserved communities in Alabama, and teach students about rural/community medicine.

The hall of fame also honored two faculty members. C. Neal Canup, M.D., a clinical professor, is a family practitioner

in Anniston, Ala., and the past-president of the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Family Physicians. The late Alice McNeal, M.D., was the former chair of the Department of Anesthesiology, the state's first female anesthesiologist, and the first female chair of an academic anesthesiology department in the nation.

UAB professor emeritus Wayne Finley, Ph.D., M.D., served as chair of the Hall of Fame committee. Founded in 1997, the Hall of Fame recognizes people who have made outstanding contributions to or rendered exemplary service for health care in Alabama.



In Case of Emergency

Alumni Fund Supports Students in Need

By Charles Buchanan

Medical students are trained to assist patients in need, but what happens when they are the ones who need a helping hand? They can turn to the Medical Alumni Association (MAA), which has established a special fund to help medical students who face overwhelming financial struggles resulting from unavoidable emergencies.

"In the past few years, the Medical Student Assistance Fund (MSAF) has provided students with the resources and encouragement they need to stay in school as they face challenging situations," says Meredith Burns, MAA interim director. Available to students in good academic standing, the fund is primarily supported by gifts from MAA members and by sales of greeting cards featuring art created by School of Medicine students.

Third-year student Valerie Gribben won

the art competition for the newest card in the series. She explains that her photograph, titled "Mended" (pictured at right), shows part of a quilt that her aunt sewed in honor of a sister who had passed away from ovarian cancer.

Burns says that the MAA is offering these cards, which are blank inside, to the public to help raise additional funds for the MSAF. "We will send a pack of 10 cards to anyone who donates \$25 or more to the MSAF," she says. "Every contribution can play a crucial role in helping students in need." Contribute online at www.alabamamedicalalumni.org or mail a check with "MSAF" in the memo section to the Medical Alumni Association, MAB, 1530 3RD AVE S, BIRMINGHAM AL 35294-2140. You will receive your pack of cards via the postal service.



From the Archives

Towering Achievement

By Tim L. Pennycuff • Images courtesy of UAB Archives

This winter marks the 70th anniversary of the opening of one of UAB's most iconic buildings: Jefferson Tower. Opened as Jefferson Hospital, the facility, along with Hillman Hospital, helped establish Birmingham's Southside as a medical center. Here are a few facts—and surprises—from the building's history.

- Built by Jefferson County for the treatment of county residents, the hospital was constructed with more than \$2 million in federal funding through the Public Works Administration, part of the New Deal. It was opened as a "low-cost hospital" for "patients of modest means."
- The hospital took three years to build. An underground river discovered during construction delayed work on the building. Jefferson Hospital was dedicated in ceremonies held December 26-30, 1940, and the first patient, a construction worker who had helped lay the building's foundation, was admitted on February 1, 1941. The hospital's first baby, a girl, was born that same month.
- Called "the South's finest private hospital" when it opened, the facility offered solariums on each floor; fully air-conditioned operating and delivery rooms, and the county's first isolation rooms for the treatment of infectious diseases. All patient rooms were located on exterior walls, and heated conveyors brought food to kitchens on each patient floor. An ice-making room in the basement had a daily capacity of 8,800 pounds. The top two floors were designed as living quarters for interns and nurses.
- From March 1942 until April 1944, two floors were used as the secret headquarters of the U.S. Army's Replacement and School Command, which was responsible for training army personnel, following its wartime relocation from Washington, D.C.
- In June 1945, parts of the hospital became the teaching facility for the new, four-year Medical College of Alabama. Twenty-two juniors registered for classes that year.
- The hospital entered the electronic data processing field in 1963 with the installation of an IBM 1001 teleprocessing system.
- Jefferson Hospital was renamed Jefferson Tower in June 1979. The last inpatient facilities moved from the building in September 2010.



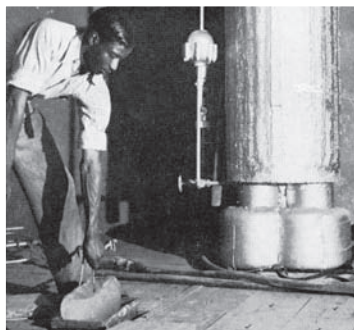
Left: Postcard of Jefferson Hospital, circa 1941
Below: Hospital entrance portico, late 1950s



The JEFFERSON Hospital



Left: Main entrance lobby, 1941
Below: Operators of the hospital's computer system included Jack Davis (seated) and Terry Mooney (standing), 1966.



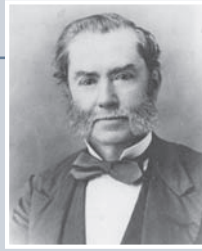
Above: The ice-making room, 1941
Right: The University Hospital baseball team, which played in the Northern Division of the Birmingham Amateur Baseball Association, on the hospital roof, 1959



Line of Leadership

By Charles Buchanan

In September, Ray L. Watts, M.D., became the 20th leader of the institution that opened as the Medical College of Alabama in Mobile 151 years ago. Here is a review of the physician-educators who served the school as dean or acting/interim dean along with the years they held the office:



William H. Anderson
1859-1861, 1868-1885



George A. Ketchum
1885-1906



B. Rhett Goode
1906-1911



Stuart Graves
1928-1945*



R. Clyde Brooks
1920-1928



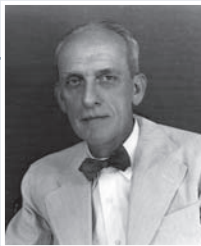
Daniel T. McCall Sr.
1920 (Acting)



Tucker H. Frazer
1915-1920



Eugene D. Bondurant
1911-1915



Roy R. Kracke
1944-1950*



Tinsley R. Harrison
1950-1951 (Acting)



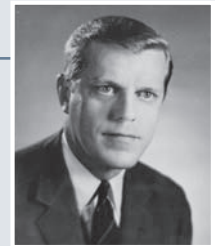
James J. Durrett
1951-1955



Robert C. Berson
1955-1962



S. Richardson Hill Jr.
1962-1968



Clifton K. Meador
1968-1973

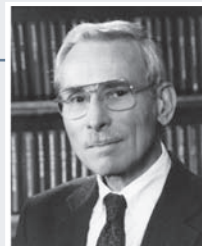
* Kracke's tenure overlapped with that of Graves as the school prepared to move from Tuscaloosa to Birmingham.



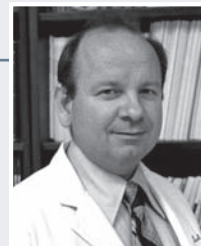
Robert R. Rich
2004-2010



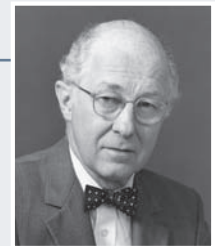
William B. Deal
1997-2004



Harold J. Fallon
1993-1997



Charlie W. Scott Jr.
1992-1993 (Interim)



James A. Pittman Jr.
1973-1992



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