



Scoop



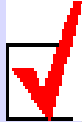
Friday, June 19, 1998

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - HOUSTON MEDICAL SCHOOL

June 30 Deadline

DON'T FORGET - EVIDENCE OF INSURABILITY

Each year during annual enrollment, insurance coverage changes can be made. An evidence of insurability form is required to: enroll yourself for the first time or increase existing group term life insurance; enroll yourself in long term disability insurance; add dependents to the health plan; add dependents to group term life. To start the process, Payroll & Benefits will be accepting phone requests at 500-3964.



FYI

Dr. Nancy W. Dickey, a 1976 graduate of UT-Houston Medical School, became the first woman president of the American Medical Association (AMA) this week.

Aug. 17-21

Nat'l Conference on Tissue Engineering

Rice University this summer will offer a five-day intensive course for doctors, engineers, researchers, and clinicians. Course fee is \$1095 before June 26, and \$1200 after the deadline. To register, or for more information, call (713) 527-4803, ext. 811, or email to: scs@rice.edu. The internet site is: www.rice.edu/scs/tissue.

SWIM SAFETY

Dr. Red Duke's Health Report will feature Water Babies, Home Pools, & Pool Safety. He can be seen on Channel 13 on Sundays, between 7 - 9 a.m. For information, call **Tamara Nesser**, 500-8403.



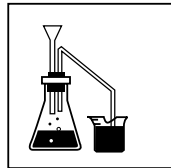
AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Alma Leal, Admin. Assistant in the Chief-of-Staff's office at LBJ, has announced the Father's Day Poetry Contest Winners. They are: 1st Place, "Daddy," **Bertha Ramirez**, sibling of Alma Leal in Chief-of-Staff's office at LBJ; 2nd Place, "Hey, Dad...It's Been a While," **Mary M. Hilliard**, Pediatrics; 3rd Place, "Fathers," **Marcia Waldbillig**, Integrative Biology. Congratulations!



DR. ERNST KNOBIL CHAIRS INVESTIGATION ON TOXINS

There is increased concern regarding the role of chemicals in the environment with hormonal activity, and the increased incidence of breast, prostate and testicular cancer, as well as a reported decline in sperm counts. This concern prompted Congress and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to commission a study by the National Academy of Sciences to investigate so-called environmental endocrine disruptors. **Dr. Ernst Knobil**, a member of the Academy and the H. Wayne Hightower Professor in the Medical Sciences in the Department of Integrative Biology, Pharmacology and Physiology, is chair of this study committee. "Although at present there is no clear evidence that these pollutants are responsible for these trends," Knobil says, "we need to be vigilant about what we put into our environment. Mercury poisoning and its deleterious effects on human health is an obvious concrete example of cause and effect. What happens to animals in the environment is also of concern. They may act as sentinels for potential danger to humans. When animals are beached on our shores, when amphibians worldwide are mysteriously disappearing, when our own national symbol, the American bald eagle, for instance, became a victim of egg shell thinning caused by DDT, a compound that can mimic the female sex hormone estrogen, we need to be aware and question why, although answers are often difficult to come by." On



June 3rd, federal policy makers declared at a State Department briefing that 12 known POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants) must be phased out globally by the year 2,000. The hazardous chemicals are: DDT, aldrin, chlordane, dieldrin, dioxins, endrin, furans, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene, mirex, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and toxaphene. According to a recent statement appearing in *Chemical & Engineering News* (June 8 issue), by **Rafe Pomerance**, State Department deputy assistant secretary for environment, global cooperation is necessary because the 12 POPs travel through air, water, and migratory species, and bioaccumulate, working up the food chain, with the highest concentrations ending up in animal tissue.

Dr. George M. Stancel, Integrative Biology, says that DDT travels from one place to another via the atmosphere and water so that eventually it gets to places where it was not applied for pest control. "There are high DDT levels in polar bear fat in the Arctic, our most pristine area, for example," he says. **Lynn Goldman**, the EPA's Assistant Administrator for Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances, says that implementing this first-ever POPS phase-out to the global community will be a "science job." While DDT, for instance, is not produced in this country, it is still used in some nations for mosquito control, to prevent the spread of malaria, and on food crops. Mexico still produces DDT and Goldman is hopeful that in phasing out DDT, Mexico will lead the way for other developing countries to do likewise. Environmentalist **Theo Colborn**, hailed by some as the **Rachel Carson** (author of *Silent Spring*) of the '90s, has added fuel to the chemophobic fire with her book, *Our Stolen Future*. She believes that the way we live today threatens "our fertility, intelligence, and survival." Taking the middle ground, in a recent PBS Frontline interview entitled "Fooling with Nature," **Dr. Linda Birnbaum**, Acting Associate Director for Health, National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, stated that, "For a toxic chemical or pesticide to be registered, you have to demonstrate that it doesn't cause effects on reproduction and development. The real problem is that there are 70,000 chemicals out there in commerce and we know very little about many of them."

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-HOUSTON
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER



Medical School

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Produced weekly by the Office of Community Affairs and Public Education

UTMS Can Help Feed Houston's Hungry Child

Because more than 100,000 children will go hungry in Houston this summer, the Medical School is working with the TMC Food Drive. The success of the food drive depends on employee participation. One in three children below the age of six live in extreme poverty in Houston, putting them at risk of hunger. "When a child doesn't get enough food, the body automatically does 'triage,' rationing energy to critical organ functions at the expense of growth and of mental and physical energy," explains **Dr. Virginia Moyer**, director of pediatrics at L.B.J. Hospital and professor of pediatrics at the Medical School. It is the body's way of saying 'better dumb than dead.' As **Jackie Pontello**, a spokesman at the Houston Food Bank, says, "Summertime is anything but a vacation for needy Houstonians." According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, the child poverty rate is growing. About 62 percent of impoverished children live with at least one parent or relative who works but are still below the poverty line. Less than a third of the children's families get their income solely from welfare benefits. Direct results of childhood poverty include illnesses, malnutrition and high-school drop-outs.



Dr. Plato Alexander, on left, with Dean Buja

Annual Faculty & Student Awards Presented

Five prestigious awards were noted on June 6 at The University of Texas-Houston Medical School commencement exercises at Edwin Hornberger Conference Center.

- **The Distinguished Alumnus Award:** The highest honor bestowed on an alumnus of the Medical School, the Distinguished Alumnus Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to medicine and mankind, was awarded to **Dr. V. Hugh Gilmore**, a 1976 Medical School graduate, is Vice President of Medical Management of the Memorial Hermann Healthcare System.
- **The Walter G. Sterling Award** for Excellence was given to **Dr. Mark Ambler**. The Sterling award is granted annually to the outstanding Medical School graduating senior as chosen by the faculty.
- **The John Freeman Faculty Teaching Award** is given each year to the outstanding basic science faculty member, as chosen by the senior class. This year's recipient is **Dr. W. Barry Van Winkle**, Professor, Dept. of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine.
- **The John P. McGovern Award**, granted annually to the outstanding clinical faculty member as chosen by the senior class, was given to **Dr. Edward R. Yeomans**, Associate Professor, Dept. of Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Medicine.
- **The Gold-Headed Cane Award**, given to honor the art of medicine, was granted to **Dr. Plato Alexander**.

"Street Sense" - Tips on Personal Safety from the UT Police

There are over 100,000 people working in the Medical Center on any given day and there are around 50,000 daily visitors here. We are indeed a small city and within any city, the issue of crime and crime prevention will come up. When dealing with issues of safety, UT Police Sargent **Armondo Gamboa**, offers these tips. "Basically, trust your instincts. Stay alert; don't get distracted; when you run across someone coming towards you and you feel uneasy, think of where your exit is; stay calm and confident; walk tall, with purpose and direction, **call the UT Police, 9-911.**" The UT Police Department has a handy brochure, "Street Sense," available with useful tips. These include:



Safety While Walking:

- Stick to well-lit, well-traveled streets. Avoid shortcuts through wooded areas, parking lots, alleys, or construction sites.
- Know your neighborhood. Find out what stores and restaurants are open late and where the police and fire stations are.
- Carry a purse close to your body, and keep a firm grip on it. Carry a wallet in an inside coat or trouser pocket, not in a back pocket.
- Try to use automatic teller machines in the daytime. Do not approach the machine if you are uneasy about people nearby.
- Have your car or house key in hand before you reach the door.
- If you think you are being followed, switch direction or cross the street. Walk toward an open store, restaurant, or lit house. If you are really scared, yell for help.
- If you are working late, make sure to **call UT Police (713)792-2890**, to escort you to your vehicle.

Safety on Elevators:

- Familiarize yourself with the emergency buttons of the elevator you ride.
- Look inside the elevator before getting in, to be sure no one is hiding in it.
- Stand near the controls.
- Get off if someone suspicious enters.
- If you are worried about someone who is waiting for the elevator with you, pretend you forgot something and don't get on.