



# Scoop



Monday, July 5  
Skeleton Holiday

Friday, July 2, 1999

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - HOUSTON MEDICAL SCHOOL

## DAIGER AND COLLEAGUES IDENTIFY NEW EYE DISEASE GENE

**Dr. Stephen Daiger** is with the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science and the Human Genetics Center, SPH. As director of the Laboratory for Molecular Diagnosis of Inherited Eye Diseases, he is involved with ongoing projects in mutation studies of genes causing retinitis pigmentosa and macular degeneration. Both Daiger and **Dr. Lori Sullivan**, Ophthalmology and Visual Science and SPH, are part of a scientific group that has spearheaded research efforts to find a new eye disease gene, RP1. Mutations in the gene are a cause of retinitis pigmentosa, an inherited disease that results in night blindness and severe loss of vision. By identifying the gene, the first step towards a cure has been taken. Their studies were based in part on DNA blood samples from a very large family in Kentucky. Due to rapid progress in genetic research, Daiger believes that most genes causing retinal degeneration will be identified within the next three to five years. He maintains an internet website, *RetNet*, listing all currently known genes causing retinal degeneration. He also oversees the genetics program for the Foundation Fighting Blindness, the largest private foundation supporting research focused on curing diseases of the eye. The website's address is <<http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/RetNet/>>.



**Dr. Stephen Daiger**

## EVENTS TO KNOW:

- **TMC Food Drive** - "Party on Webber Plaza," Thurs., **July 15**, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Food items can be dropped in boxes at elevators or checks made out to the Houston Food Bank, and dropped off at Community Affairs, G.004.
- **Annual UT - Employee Group Insurance Enrollment Medical School meetings**, Wed., **July 7**, & Wed., **July 14**, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., MSB 3.001.

## UTmost Interest

**Dr. Jon Tyson**, Center for Population Health and Evidence-Based Medicine, published "Vitamin A. Supplementation for Extremely-Low-Birth-Weight Infants," in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, June 24, to read the article the citation is *N Engl J Med* 1999; 340:1962-8...**Dr. Agnes Schonbrunn**, Integrative Biology and Pharmacology, has been appointed as a member of the Publications Committee of The Endocrine Society as well as a member of the Board of Directors of The Pituitary Society...**Dr. Adelaide A. Hebert**, vice chairman and professor in Dermatology, was in Korea for 10 days lecturing on the use of new acne therapy to dermatologists in Seoul, Taegue, Kangue and Pusan.



## CSW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS THROUGH AUGUST 2

The Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) is accepting nominations for *The President's Award for Mentoring Women 1999*, established in cooperation with the UT-President, **M. David Low**. The \$2000 award, initiated in 1995, is given to one UT-Houston Health Science Center employee in each category: Faculty; Administrative and Professional staff; and Classified staff. The person mentored must be a woman; the mentor may be a woman or a man. The mentor is someone in the institution who coaches, teaches, advises, supports, guides, and helps the person being mentored achieve her goals. Nominations are due by Monday, **August 2**. See the CSW web site at <[http://oac.hsc.uth.tmc.edu/ut\\_general/committees/stat\\_wom/](http://oac.hsc.uth.tmc.edu/ut_general/committees/stat_wom/)>. For a description, click on Current Events. Send nominations to CSW Chair **Mary Frances Fabrizio** at LBJ 1EC73029, or for questions, call Ms. Fabrizio at 713-636-4645.

## COMPUTATIONAL BIOLOGY COMPETITION ENSUES

Computation Biology covers a broad area, including genomics, population genetics, and biological systems such as neural networks and cell signaling. The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) is currently accepting nominations for two investigator competitions, *Investigator Competition in Computational Biology* and *Assistant Investigator*.

The UT-Houston Health Science Center will be submitting one nomination for the Investigator Competition in Computational Biology, a new program. Nominations may be made for appointment at the level of assistant investigator, associate investigator, or full investigator.

The goal of the Assistant Investigator Competition is to identify outstanding scientists who will become HHMI assistant investigators. The UT-HHSC will submit two nominations. Appointment will be made at the assistant investigator rank.

To apply for either of these programs, submit a letter of nomination, curriculum vitae and bibliography, and a brief (two-to-four page) statement of the research program and future plans by Monday, **July 19**, to the Research Committee, attention **Dr. John Byrne** at MSB 7.046.

## INSURANCE VENDOR FAIR

Thursday, **July 8**, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., MSB, 5th floor Gallery. Vendors attending: Cigna Life Insurance, Cigna Accident Insurance, Cigna Health (UT Select), TUHP Health (POS), Prudential Health, PCS Prescription Service, Delta Dental, United Dental, Superior Vision, Anthem Insurance Inc. (UT Flex), and CNA Insurance (LTD). It's an opportunity to visit and ask questions.

## CRIME ALERT BULLETIN

The UT Police Department urges caution when walking in the parking garages or parking lots. Use the "Buddy System" or UT Police Escort Service, 713-792-2890, a 24-hour service. The emergency number is 713-500-HELP. Crime Awareness classes are at 713-792-7268.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-HOUSTON  
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER



Medical School

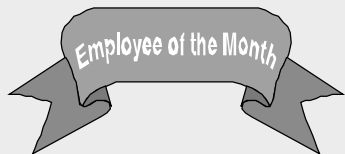
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## July Employee of the Month - Ginny Solt

She didn't fall out of a tree at the age of nine, break a leg and have an awakening, but orthopaedics has figured in **Ginny Solt's** career life for the last 20 years. "It's been a good choice for me," she reminisced. "I came to Houston 20 years ago from Fairlawn, New Jersey, near Patterson, and worked in orthopaedics, the private practice side, for most of those years. I really enjoy the academic side and seeing how it all fits together." Our July Employee of the Month is senior executive assistant to the chair in the Department of Orthopaedics and part of a two-year old team that includes **Dr. Thomas Clanton**, professor and chair, **Ken Neill**, Director of Management Operations (DMO), and **Irene McDonald**, administrative assistant. Wednesday, **July 21**, a day before her birthday, will mark Ginny's second anniversary in the department.



The stuff of orthopedics can cover both fracture and cartilage healing, joint kinematics, bone strength, both in health (microgravity) and disease (osteoporosis) states, bone remodeling, and trabecular bone structure. "And I'm Dr. Clanton's sounding board. It's a privilege and honor to work for him," said Ginny. He'll assume the presidency of the American Orthopedic Foot and Ankle Society during the week of **July 8 - 11**. So she's busy with the upcoming four-day conference and inauguration preparations taking place in Puerto Rico. "He promised me he wouldn't write so much," she laughed. But Ginny was obviously proud of her chair's latest book chapter on "Athletic Injuries to the Soft Tissues of the Foot and Ankle" appearing in *Surgery of the Foot and Ankle*, '99 edition.

"We've got a good solid crew in this department. Part of what I do is coordinating and scheduling the chair's multi-tasked responsibilities, working with Ken, and **Deborah Roberts**, the residency coordinator." Ginny spoke proudly of the residency program's recent certification, with commendations in orthopedics, by the American Council of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). It's quite busy in the department with the summer research program that will end in August, as well as with 13 residents, a fellowship program, Fracture Conferences, and Grand Rounds every Thursday morning at 8 a.m. in Room 2.103. When asked what makes her such a good communicator, she admitted that working for Life Flight at Hermann as an administrative manager years ago was an eye-opener. "I used that one-day training course in Ammerman Media Training to good advantage," she said. "We had to learn to communicate with clarity, brevity, and detail, to say exactly what we meant. An invaluable tool in the work world, even today."

And today finds Ginny in her spare time going to the theatre occasionally with her sister **Jane**, celebrating her dad, **Neil's** 81<sup>st</sup> birthday at an authentic New Jersey-style Italian restaurant in Spring, TX, and finishing her latest historical novel, *The Testament*. "I like good endings that are realistic." And Ken Neill testified, "She's very proactive. She anticipates needs much like the character 'Radar' did on the *Mash* series a while back." With her new departmental team players, Ginny Solt has begun a realistic building phase that is sure to have a good ending.



## UT-HOUSTON FACULTY AND SHRINERS HOSPITAL

Shriners is a godsend to many deserving but underfunded children who are in need of solutions to complex orthopaedic problems. All medical care at Shriners Hospitals for Children - Houston is free of charge. Shriners Hospitals are nation-wide and are supported primarily by donations, wills and bequests.



Several UT-Houston faculty are involved with the Shriners program. Among them are **Drs. Thomas Clanton** and **Richard Haynes**, Orthopaedics; Dr. Haynes is also Chief of Service at Shriners; **Drs. Jacqueline Hecht** and **Hope Northrup**, both Pediatrics, and **Drs. Ian Butler**, **John Slopis**, **James**

**Wheless**, and **Jules Constantinou**, all Neurology. **Dr. Keith Loudon**, UT-Medical School, is a resident in training at Shriners.

Dr. Hecht, for example, is a geneticist specializing in genetic dwarfing conditions that are associated with orthopaedic problems. Shriners provides comprehensive orthopedic care for children who have special orthopaedic needs. Correct identification is essential for the long-term care and management of these conditions.

Conditions treated include: scoliosis (curvature of the spine), congenital dislocated hip(s), spina bifida/myelodysplasia, club foot, limb deficiencies, arthrogryposis (fixed joints), hand problems, cerebral palsy, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, rickets, dwarfism, and neuromuscular disorders.

## ORTHOPAEDICS AND SUMMER RESEARCH

The Department of Orthopaedics is participating again this year in the UT-Houston Summer Research Program. There are two undergraduates, **Bryant Lee** from A&M, and **Jody Cimbalo** from Tulane; and five MS1's: **Mark Willits**, **Joel Underwood**, **Mike Brennan**, **Christian Freeman**, and **Christopher Peterson**. These students work in conjunction with faculty members on various research projects. Mike Brennan is assisting **Drs. Gloria Gogola** and **Catherine Ambrose** on "Effect of Ovariectomy and Indomethacin on Bone PGE2 Levels in Rats." Jody Cimbalo is working with **Dr. Z. Maria Oden** on "The Influence of Bisphosphonate Therapy on the Density Distribution and Structural Capacity of the Human Femur." The students are paid a stipend and given a supplies allowance, both of which are processed through the Office of Education Access and Equity. The program runs from June 1st through August 6th, with students presenting posters at UT-Houston's Annual Research Day in the Fall.