Scoop

July 19, 2002

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

Events to Know

July

24 Clinical Research Curriculum: Scientific Writing Workshop, 5 - 6:30 p.m., MSB 2.135.

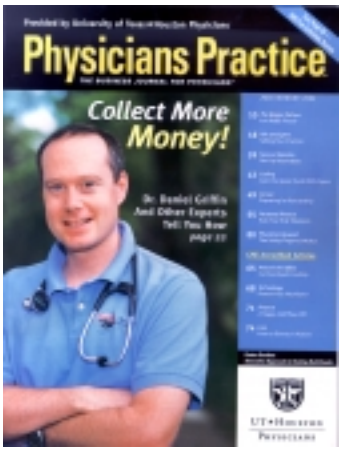
August

1 Deadline for Mobility Program, a 100 percent mass transit subsidy for full-time UT-HHSC employees. Web site information, <http://ae.uth.tmc.edu>. For van pool services, call 1-800-VanRide; for Metro, call 713-635-4000; for The Woodlands, call Woodlands Express, 281-363-0882. Questions, call 713-500-3430.

UTMost Interest

Dr. David Robinson, assistant professor and vice-chairman, Emergency Medicine, presented "Predictive value of serial cardiac troponins for undiagnosed high risk chest pain: Testing a clinical rule" at the 9th International Conference in Emergency Medicine in Edinburgh, Scotland...**Dr. C.S. Raman,** Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, is an invited speaker at the Gordon Conference on "Chemistry and Biology of Tetrapyrroles" being held this week at Salve Regina University in Newport, R.I.

NOTE - The first edition of *Physicians Practice*, July/August 2002, is out. A journal for physicians that focuses on timely medical practice issues, it features a special 7-page insert highlighting UT-Houston Physicians.



SPUDICH IS NEW WELCH CHAIR AND CENTER DIRECTOR

Dr. John Lee Spudich, professor in the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, and Microbiology & Molecular Genetics, and a faculty member since 1991, has been named the Robert A. Welch Distinguished Chair in Chemistry. Funds generated from this prestigious chair, which includes a $2M endowment, will be available for research and development in support of Spudich's work. He uses molecular biology, crystallography, and physical chemistry to study the molecular mechanisms by which membrane receptors receive and transmit signals. His research emphasizes the rhodopsin family of photosensory receptors —which sense color, intensity, and pattern of light —in microorganisms and higher animals.

Dr. John Lee Spudich

He also has been appointed director of the newly established Center for Membrane Biology at the Medical School. There is a great need for advances in membrane protein structural biology and membrane structure/function research in general, Spudich said. The human genome sequence tells us that membrane proteins make up about 30 percent of the human proteome, yet our knowledge of their structures and mechanisms of action lags far behind that of soluble proteins. The cell membrane surface and its exposed proteins are the most accessible targets for modulation of human tissue activity as well as destruction of oncogenic or pathogenic cells. Membrane biology research is needed for the development of new drugs and antibiotics, Spudich said. He plans for the Center to play a major role in addressing this need.

Mammalian membrane protein expression, crystallization technology, electron and X-ray crystallography, lipid/protein chemistry, membrane protein insertion and folding, bioinformatics and genomics of membrane proteins, and computational chemistry of membrane macromolecules are areas that will be particularly targeted for new faculty recruitment into the Center.

NURSING SCHOLARSHIP ESTABLISHED

Dr. Larry Gilstrap, chairman, Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Sciences, celebrated his wife's birthday during National Nurses Week by endowing a nursing scholarship in his wife's name. It is known as the "Jo Ellen Reed-Gilstrap, R.N. Scholarship Fund."

Funds from this permanent endowment will be used to fund scholarships to nursing students at the School of Nursing. A dinner in Jo Ellen's honor was held Thursday, June 27, and the recipient of the first scholarship, Sue Bhakta, was there.

Honoree Jo Ellen Reed-Gilstrap, M.S.N., R.N. (l.), with Sue Bhakta and Dean Patricia Starck, D.S.N., R.N.

JUMP-START PROGRAM FOR FACULTY - DEADLINE AUG. 1

Short-term (2-6 weeks) support, up to $2,000, will be awarded to mid-career faculty members needing support for beginning a new basic or clinical research project. The deadline is Thurs., Aug. 1. For more information, call **Juanita Mattingly** at 713-500-5103.

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112 High School Seniors Explore a Medical Career Path - UT-Houston Medical School Style

"Maybe a medical career is for me." That's very possibly the thought that led 112 high school seniors, from 40 states, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Canada, to the UT-Houston Medical School campus July 11, as part of their National Youth Leadership Forum experience. **Mark Boyle**, MS II, coordinated the UT-Houston Medical School tour. **Dean Max Buja** welcomed the students, and **Dr. Wallace Gleason**, assistant dean for Admissions and Student Affairs, and **Dr. Gary Rosenfeld**, assistant dean, Educational Programs, were the principal speakers. Other activities included introductions to gross anatomy, neuroscience, and sound lab rotations, as well as a question and answer period with a medical student panel.

A leadership forum participant inspects and identifies a brain.

Dr. Gleason introduced students to an overview of the admissions process. He emphasized that besides intellectual strengths, being able to interview well – being comfortable in the interview – is an important skill that gives the admissions team a good idea of the candidate. Students are rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being: "Get this person in here right now." The subject of what constitutes an ideal physician is an important one for the admissions team when assessing a candidate for medical school. A well-rounded student, with good interpersonal conversational skills, with a good knowledge bank, and a stomach for the blood and guts reality of hospitals, are core indicators, Gleason said. The admissions team also looks at a candidate's motivation and his or her drive to be successful. Because of the nature of the doctor-patient relationship, where a tremendous amount of trust is required, impeccable integrity is a must. In addition, the physical rigors of demanding and long hours, first as a medical student, and later, as a doctor, necessitate students with good physical stamina.

Wes Hamilton, MS II, (r.), instructs participants on the intricacies of brain functioning.

Whitney Prince, MS II, (l.), holding a brain in her right hand, illustrates the various components of this complex system.

Dr. Rosenfeld gave a bird's-eye view of what it's like to be involved, as a college sophomore or junior, with UT-Houston Medical School's Summer Research Program. He said student interns become totally immersed in their chosen department, and subjects as diverse as NASA research to biorhythms have been explored. At the end of the 10-week experience, an abstract with the student's name is published and put on the Web. The stipend for students is $2,500 for 10 weeks. Rosenfeld outlined four realistic outcomes that each student can hope to take away at the conclusion of the program: THE 'AHA' EFFECT —The thrill of discovery and the creation of new knowledge; THE CAREER JUMP-START —Possibly, down the road, a career in research or combined research/clinical endeavors; THE FUN CONNECTION —A fantastic opportunity to explore, as a consumer of scientific research, the almost limitless subjects of scientific inquiry, and to find out "Am I cut out for this?"; and finally, LASTING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS —The relationships that are formed in a laboratory setting, where professor and student work together toward a common goal, facing unknown outcomes, are very strong, very unique, and can last a lifetime.

Jeremy Brown, MS II, (r.), gives an overview of cranial diseases and medical treatments.

For the Summer Research Program, 50 students normally are accepted out of 300 applicants. Requirements include 12 hours of a science discipline, a 3.0 GPA, a 250 word essay describing experiences and interests, a college transcript, and two letters of recommendation. Those interested may e-mail **Jimmie Pope**, coordinator, Summer Research Program, <Jimmie.L.Pope@uth.tmc.edu>.

Another National Youth Leadership Forum, with a draw of 130 high school seniors, will take place Thursday, **July 25**. For more information on the forums, visit the Web site at <www.nylf.org>. ***- C. O'Brien***