



Scoop

Dec. 5, 2003

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

Events to Know

December

6 Last chance to Buy a Book. Help a Student. At the Barnes and Noble Bookfair, 3003 West Holcombe Blvd. at Buffalo Speedway.

17 Dean's Holiday Reception, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., Fifth Floor Gallery. For all students, residents, faculty, and staff. Cookies and punch served.

January

28 Annual MSRDP meeting, open to all MSRDP membership, MSB 3.001.

UTMost Interest

Dr. H. Vernon Anderson, Division of Cardiology, was panel member at the recent AHA Scientific Sessions in Orlando, Fla. Under discussion was "How to Read and Write a Scientific Paper." Anderson is an associate editor of *Circulation*, the flagship journal of the American Heart Association and serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*.

DONATE BOOKS TO ROR-TEXAS

Reach Out and Read-Texas wants your new or gently used board, picture, and chapter books in any language. The ROR-TX program ensures that all children are exposed to books at an early age. Pediatricians at participating clinics give every child a book at each check-up from age 6 months to 5 years. Pediatricians talk to parents about the importance of reading aloud, and volunteers read to the children in the waiting rooms.

Bring donations to the box outside of UCT 2431 or, if you're participating in the Jingle Bell Run, Sunday, **Dec. 14**, in Sam Houston Park, 1100 Bagby, you can drop them off there.

For information about ROR-Texas, contact <Sheri.Sarkis@uth.tmc.edu>, 713-500-3831, or visit <<http://www.reachoutandread.org/cgi-bin/tx.pl>>. For information about the Jingle Bell Run, visit <<http://www.jinglebellrun.org>>.

THIRD KNOBIL LECTURER IS THIRD NOBEL LAUREATE IN SERIES

Dr. Robert Horvitz, a 2002 Nobel Laureate, will be the Ernst Knobil Distinguished Lecturer at 4 p.m., Wed., **Dec. 10** in MSB 3.001. Horvitz is the third Knobil lecturer; all three lecturers have been Nobel Laureates. The title of his talk is "The Genetic Control of Programmed Cell Death in *Caenorhabditis elegans*." Horvitz is the David H. Koch professor of biology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a neurobiologist and geneticist at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.



Dr. Robert Horvitz

Horvitz is widely known for his studies on how genes control the development and functioning of the nervous system. He uses genetics, molecular biology, biochemistry, electrophysiology, laser microsurgery, and pharmacology to study how the nervous system controls behavior.

He has elucidated a molecular pathway for programmed cell death (apoptosis), which is fundamental to nervous system development in all animals. Further, Horvitz has discovered and characterized key genes controlling cell death in *C. elegans*. He has shown how these genes interact with each other in the cell death process and that corresponding genes exist in humans.

Horvitz joined the faculty of MIT in the Department of Biology in 1978 and was named David Koch Professor of Biology in 2000. He also is an investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and was appointed investigator at the McGovern Institute in 2001. Horvitz is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the American Academy of Microbiology. His honors are numerous and include the Charles A. Dana Award for pioneering achievements in health, the Bristol-Myers Squibb Award for distinguished achievement in neuroscience, the Gairdner Foundation International Award, the American Cancer Society Medal of Honor, and the Peter Gruber Foundation Genetics Prize. Horvitz was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2002.

ADVICE FOR THOSE STUNG BY THE ASP CATERPILLAR

Those cute little caterpillars roaming around the trees and sidewalks at the Medical School are not necessarily your friend. So says **Dr. David Eagleman**, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, who is reminding Texas Medical Center personnel to take heed. Eagleman was himself recently the target of an asp caterpillar sting and was quite sick for four or five days. The good scientist that he is, immediately upon recovering, he did extensive research on the small pain perpetrator.

"While most caterpillars are totally harmless, a common species in Texas, the asp caterpillar (*Megalopyge opercularis*) is the most toxic species in the United States and can give painful envenomation," Eagleman said.



The asp caterpillar is also called the puss moth caterpillar.

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HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT HOUSTON
MEDICAL SCHOOL

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STING REMEDIES, CONTINUED

When the asp caterpillar rubs or is pressed against the skin, its venomous hairs break off and stick into the host's skin, causing a severe burning sensation and rash.

Puss moth caterpillars are teardrop-shaped and with their long, silky hairs, resemble a tuft of cotton, fur, or wool. They are typically an inch and a half long, with a peppered gray color.

In the event that you are stung, Eagleman advised, remove the venom spines by pressing scotch tape over the entire wound, and then remove the tape. This may need to be repeated more than once. Use calamine lotion several times a day at the contact site for comfort from itching. He also recommended taking antihistamines like Zyrtec 10 mg tablets or Benadryl 25 mg tablets, two Advil or Ibuprofen every six hours for pain, and using an ice pack on the wound site. When in doubt, see a physician.

The typical reaction is that the skin becomes red, burns, tingles, and sometimes becomes numb and swollen. With a larger dose of the venom, serious reactions can occur and include: difficulty breathing, swelling of the airways, abdominal pain, headache, nausea, vomiting, and moderately severe pain. Seek medical treatment for these symptoms.

Note: Eagleman is collecting patient reports from those who have been badly stung. Please contact him for more information at 713-500-5709, <<http://nba.uth.tmc.edu/homepage/eagleman>>, or <David.Eagleman@uth.tmc.edu>.

- C. O'Brien

FACULTY NOTE -

Dr. S. Ward Casscells, Department of Internal Medicine, conferred with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and Dr. Dean Ornish recently about Dr. Ornish's latest findings on diet and prostate cancer at a "Top-to-Top" conference, which featured talks on the future of health care, business, and politics. Dr. Casscells talked about influenza as a trigger of heart attacks.



Dr. S. Ward Casscells, center, talks to Dr. Dean Ornish, left, and Henry Kissinger at a recent conference.

CONGRATULATIONS!

CytoGenix Inc. recently announced that **Dr. Samuel Kaplan**, professor and chairman of the Department of Microbiology at the Medical School, has joined the CytoGenix Scientific Advisory Board.

Dr. Adelaide Hebert, vice chairman of the Department of Dermatology, has been appointed to board of directors' membership, The International Hyperhidrosis Society, a non-profit advocacy group formed earlier this year to promote research into, and awareness of, excessive sweating.



Beth Ardoin Watson speaks to Alvin high schoolers on their Career Day.

MED SCHOOL REPS SPEAK AT ALVIN H. S. CAREER DAY

Seven staff members and a GSBS student participated as speakers at Alvin High School Annual Career Day Oct. 29.

Participants from the Medical School included **Christy Ankrom**, clinical research coordinator in Neurology; **Dr. E.C. Coffee**, post-doctoral fellow in the Department of Radiology; **Marian Skewes**, senior research nurse in Neurosurgery; and **Linda Lindloff**, DMO in the Department of Family Practice and Community Medicine. Other participants were **Joe Parham**, Environmental Health and Safety; **Rebecca Milman**, GSBS; **Tammy Merimon**, HCPC; and **Beth Ardoin-Watson**, Academic Computing.

From these experts, students were able to learn about careers in research, radiology, nursing, mental health, management in higher education, environmental health and safety, medical physics, and computers and technology.

Catherine Ryan, the event coordinator and former UTHSC safety officer, said the students were really interested in the topics presented and greatly benefited from the knowledge and expertise of the presenters.

"What a delight the kids were! They were attentive and participative," said Beth Ardoin, manager of multimedia production in academic computing. "Of course the groups varied, but the third group was such fun that I would have kept them all day. I was met at the car by two young men who made sure I was always in the right place. They walked me to the sign up, picked me up from breakfast and escorted me to the classroom. They were interesting and informative."

- L. Rodriguez

GOVERNOR PERRY APPOINTS BARNHILL TO UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM BOARD OF REGENTS

Gov. Rick Perry recently announced the appointment of **John W. Barnhill, Jr.** of Brenham to The University of Texas System Board of Regents to serve a term to expire Feb. 1, 2009.

Barnhill retired as executive vice president and general sales manager of Blue Bell Creameries. He is chairman of the Bank of Brenham, vice chairman of the Main Street Brenham board, chairman of the Washington County Forum at Blinn College, and on the board of the Economic Development Foundation of Brenham. Barnhill is a trustee of the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum Foundation and the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission.

Barnhill is a past president of the Texas Exes and past chairman of the UT System Chancellor's Council Executive Committee. He is a life member of the UT Austin Development Board and the Longhorn Foundation Advisory Council. He received a bachelor's degree from The University of Texas at Austin.