



Scoop

March 26, 2004

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

Events to Know

March

30 Health & Human Spirit Lecturer, Dr. Jeffrey Bishop, noon, MSB 3.001.

April

1 Lecturers Drs. McCullough and Boisaubin, noon, MSB 3.001.

May

13 Annual Faculty Meeting, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., MSB 2.006.

30 Commencement, 1 p.m., Assembly Hall, George R. Brown Convention Center.

UTMost Interest

President James T. Willerson, with collaborators, will lead one of the nation's first clinical trials of stem cell therapy for heart failure patients.

The U.S. Food and Drug administration has approved the clinical trial (*Houston Chronicle*, 3/24/04)...**Dr. Andrew Harper**, assistant dean, Educational Programs and Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, was quoted concerning the use of antidepressant drugs (*Houston Chronicle*, 3/23/04).

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT LEAVE PROPOSALS DUE

Proposals for Faculty Development are due **Mon., April 5** in the Office of Faculty Affairs, 7.130MSB. The guidelines allow for the submission of proposals twice a year and can be found at: <<http://www.med.uth.tmc.edu/faculty/index.htm>>. For questions, call **Juanita Sunday**, 713-500-5103.

"CAT IN THE HAT" VISIT

Westley Edmondson, Interactive Theater Company, visited the 2004 Reach Out & Read Program March 5.

Volunteers read to children in participating doctor's waiting rooms and children receive age-appropriate books to take home. For more information, visit <<http://www.reachoutandreadtexas.org>>.



- photo, S. Rasp

Hard Hat Update

FULL STEAM AHEAD FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL RECONSTRUCTION

Nobody said it would be easy, but for every request concerning the reconstruction of the Medical School — post Tropical Storm Allison — there was a problem to overcome, said **Jim Victor**, flood recovery program manager. And each problem would involve suggested solutions, reworking the equation until satisfactory, and many people to execute that solution. Some of the milestones to date include:



Jim Victor, Flood Recovery Program Manager

- In January 2003 building designs and contractual procurements started to take place.
- The Legislature approved a building budget in June 2003.
- Contracts were finalized. Bids and money were available by October 2004.



Today, with incredible work activity over the last six months, the new Leather Lounge is due to open in two weeks, along with the reopening of Webber Plaza; six air handlers will go online by April; the basement flood protection wall will be completed in May; the electron microscope and cyclotron also will be installed in May; the perimeter granite and glass wall will be done in June; the Learning Resource Center and Gross Anatomy areas are due to open in July; and the remaining ground floor will be completed in August.

The project has not been without hurdles. "It's been quite a task. At times I've felt like Sisyphus rolling an enormous rock up the hill, or Hercules cleaning out the Augean stables," he said. Victor's basement team, for instance, had to dig out — some by hand — 60 dump trucks of dirt because of structural problems and live wire issues that had to be addressed and rectified.

A sleep study lab at Memorial Hermann asked the team to dampen the construction noise for their clients at one recent juncture of the project. "Our work was suspended for three days," Victor said. "We accommodated them, and they were happy."

All of the work so far, Victor noted, has been done in an occupied building, with safety first, the operative rule.

"Jim and all the other workers have done a tremendous job," said **Dean Stanley Schultz**. "They are true champions in the eyes of all of us who love this Medical School."

"The only more strenuous situation I could compare this project to, perhaps, is accomplishing what we've accomplished so far in Baghdad, under mortar attack," Victor said.

"Many folks have contributed to the successes we've had to date, including Vaughn Construction Co. and D. E. Harvey Builders," Victor said.

What's the next big challenge for Victor and company? The replacement of the John Freeman Building with a six-story edifice looms ahead.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony is planned in early April for the reopening of Webber Plaza and the opening of the new Leather Lounge. Stay tuned for further details to be published in *Scoop*.

- C. O'Brien



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HUNDREDS OF UT MEDICAL STUDENTS MEET THEIR MATCH

At a young age, **Raymond "Ramey" Blair, Jr.**, learned how difficult it can be to access the health-care system.

In the small North Texas town where he was raised, doctors were few and far between. And if you didn't have health insurance, opportunities to see those physicians were even fewer. "We never went to the doctor unless someone was extremely sick. It was cost prohibitive," said Blair, a fourth-year Medical School student.

"When I did get to go to the doctor, I saw how helpful they were. I knew I wanted to do the same thing. I wanted to help people."

On Match Day, Blair came one step closer to his goal of providing medical outreach and patient care in rural parts of Texas when he and almost 200 of his classmates found out where they will do residency training after graduation.

The Match, conducted annually by the National Resident Matching Program, matches the preferences of applicants with the preferences of residency programs in order to fill the available training positions at U.S. teaching hospitals. This year, more than 20,000 matches were made to first- and second-year residency positions.

At the Medical School, internal medicine, family practice, and anesthesiology were the top three areas of medicine in which this year's class chose to specialize.

"We are very proud of our students and their specialty choices," said **Margaret McNeese**, associate dean of student affairs.

"I think our students did very well, and I am confident they will reflect well upon this institution in their futures," added **Interim Dean Stanley Schultz**.

While the overall percentage of UT students going into primary care has declined in recent years, the number of seniors choosing

family practice increased from 15 in 2003 to 22 this year. This bucks a national trend in family practice, which has seen a steady decrease in the percentage of seniors matching to its positions since 1996. Blair, who will do his residency at John Peter Smith Hospital in Fort Worth, is among those students who plan to fill the need for family physicians.

Anesthesiology continues to enjoy a surge in popularity. In 1999, it ranked seventh on the list of specialties UT students sought. Now it is in the top three, with 18 seniors choosing this year to specialize in anesthesiology.

Charles Cowles, who will stay at the UT Medical School for his residency training, said lifestyle is one of the reasons anesthesiology is becoming a more popular, competitive specialty among new physicians.

"As anesthesiologists, you are not on call for individual patient issues," said Cowles, who spent 14 years as a paramedic before enrolling in medical school. "Rather, you are providing service to a hospital for surgeries and OB patients. It allows for more control of your personal life."

Surgery was the fourth most popular specialty among UT seniors. **Summer Alexander**, who will do her residency at Inova Fairfax Hospital in Virginia, is one of an increasing number of women who are specializing in general surgery. In 1980, there were only 1,150 women in the field, according to the Association of Women Surgeons. In 2001, the number of women in general surgery had almost quadrupled.

"There are so many aspects of surgery that I really like. It's dynamic. The first time you see your patients, they are sick and at their very worst," Alexander said. "As a surgeon, you have the opportunity to make a big difference in their lives."

The specialty that experienced the biggest increase in interest this year at UT was psychiatry. Thirteen students plan to begin their training in psychiatry this summer. In 2003, only two Medical School students sought psychiatry positions. Pathology also experienced significant growth. Nine Medical School students sought pathology residencies this year, compared with none in 2003. Nationally, the number of pathology positions filled by U.S. medical school seniors has almost doubled since 2000.

- story, M. Raine; photos, E. Fant



Dr. Schultz congratulates a student as class president Bobbie Jo Tilley receives a hug.

"When I did get to go to the doctor, I saw how helpful they were. I knew I wanted to do the same thing. I wanted to help people."



A happy moment for Tolly Cruit.



Laren Gore, L.E. Brumley, and Tolly Cruit (l. to r.), share the good news.

"BRAIN NIGHT" A HIT AT LOCAL MUSEUM

During March's Brain Awareness Week, "Brain Night" was hosted by the Neuroscience Research Center (NRC) at the John P. McGovern Museum of Health and Medical Science. Volunteer staff from the NRC, postdoctoral fellows, residents, and Medical School students participated in mini-lectures for the children and brain-related demonstrations. Face painting and free gifts and balloons added another dimension of fun to the evening of science.



Presenting a brain specimen is Evangelos Antzoulatos, (l.) with Dr. John Byrne (r).