



# Scoop

June 10, 2005

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

## Events to Know

### June

**10 Deadline for Dean's Research Scholarship Awards, 5 p.m.** \$2,500 scholarships to be awarded to up to 10 students who have advanced to Ph.D. candidacy prior to June 10. Contact <Kimberly.J.Campbell@uth.tmc.edu>.

**14 Faculty Promotions and Tenure Process Presentation.** 9:30 a.m. - noon, MSB 2.135. Sponsored by Faculty Affairs and the Association of Women Faculty.

**15 BASEMENT RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY & OPEN HOUSE, 9:30-10:30 a.m.** Join **Dean Schultz** and other university leadership. Program commences in Medical School Leather Lounge. Continental breakfast available.

**15 MEDICAL SCHOOL BOOKSTORE REOPENS.** MSB B.600.

**27 - July 12 TMC Channel 11 Spirit of Texas Food Drive.** Drop-off points throughout the TMC. Call 713-500-3035 for info.

### July

**28 Nano Summit Conference, visit** <<http://www.nanotechfoundation.org/VVO.html>>.

## MURAD TO STEP DOWN AS DEPARTMENT CHAIR AUG. 31

**Dean Stanley Schultz** has announced the resignation of **Dr. Ferid Murad** as chair of the Department of Integrative Biology and Pharmacology, effective Aug. 31, 2005.

"Our institution is fortunate that he will remain as director of the Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases (IMM) and continue his distinguished record of discovery and commitment to academic excellence," Dean Schultz said.

Dr. Murad has been active in both academic medicine and industry throughout his career. He joined the Medical School faculty in April 1997 as chair of the Department of Integrative Biology and Pharmacology and soon thereafter was named the co-recipient of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, the first such distinction held by a faculty member at the UT Health Science Center and Texas Medical Center.

"We owe Dr. Murad a tremendous debt of gratitude for his leadership and many contributions to the growth and maturity of this School and look forward to his participation in our academic programs as a distinguished professor," Dean Schultz said. "I hope that you will join me in thanking and wishing Dr. Murad continued success."

**Dr. Norman Weisbrodt**, currently vice chair of the Department of Integrative Biology and Pharmacology, has agreed to serve as interim chair until a permanent chair is appointed.



Dr. Ferid Murad

## \$3M GRANT TO ESTABLISH DRUG DISCOVERY INCUBATOR

**Dr. George Stancel**, professor, Integrative Biology and Pharmacology, is all smiles. He's just received a five-year \$3 million NIH grant, "Training Program in Pharmacoinformatics," that will support nine graduate students and six postdoctoral fellows. The grant involves a consortium of 60 faculty representing six different institutions and will serve as a nurturing incubator for breakthrough pharmaceuticals.

"I believe in this project," said Stancel, who also is the dean of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. "Just go to Google and type in 'pharmacoinformatics' and see what you get. We're in the top 10 list of 'pharmacoinformatic' hits."

Stancel is the principal investigator of a grant that involves the health science center, UT M. D. Anderson, Baylor, the University of Houston, Rice, and UTMB. The Keck Center of the Gulf Coast Consortia (see <<http://cohesion.rice.edu/centersandinst/gcc/gccpi.cfm>>), is working in conjunction with the grant and has set up a new training program. Faculty involved come from such diverse areas as pharmacology, molecular biology, computer science, genetics, bioengineering, and pharmaceutical chemistry. The grant's purpose, according to Stancel, is to train young researchers to learn how to develop new drugs, e.g., new pain medications, new antibiotics, and

(Cont'd. on back)

## UTMost Interest

**Dr. S. Ward Casscells**, vice president, biotechnology, was featured in the *Houston Chronicle* for joining the U.S. Army Reserves.

**Dr. Deepa Vasudevan**, associate professor of family and community medicine, was quoted in the *Houston Chronicle* about CDC's guidelines on obesity.



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## 2005 HERBERT L. AND MARGARET W. DUPONT MASTER CLINICAL TEACHING AWARD — DR. VICTOR LAVIS

**Victor Lavis, M.D.**, professor of internal medicine, Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes, and Metabolism, is the recipient of the 2005 Herbert L. and Margaret W. DuPont Master Clinical Teaching Award.

Established in 2001 and made possible by a gift from the DuPonts, the award recognizes and preserves the essence and quality of the master clinical teacher, reflecting the Medical School's top priority of quality clinical medical education.

"Dr. Lavis is a very hard working, dedicated educator," said **Dr. Patricia Butler**, associate dean for Educational Programs. "His style of teaching elicits the best in his students and residents, challenging them to think beyond the superficial, and to always focus on patient care."

Lavis has been a keystone in the Medical School's educational program since the mid-1970s. He has taught in the junior clerkship in internal medicine since 1976, has done consultation rounds and outpatient clinics in internal medicine/endocrinology for the senior elective since 1976, and he has been a second-year preceptor in the Introduction to Clinical Medicine since 1977. He has led the endocrinology section of the second-year Fundamentals of Clinical Medicine course since 1992.

He was the program director of the UT Diabetes Research Training Program (1978-1986), and the program director of the Internal Medicine Residency Training from 1985 to 1998.

Almost every graduate of the Medical School has been taught by Lavis in one course or another. He also teaches internal medicine/endocrinology to residents and subspecialty fellows.

"Our school is most fortunate to have leaders like the DuPonts who emphasize clinical teaching," he said. "It's gratifying to be recognized in this way for one's work. I hope that medical education will stimulate our students to embrace lifelong learning."

Lavis received his medical and undergraduate degrees from Stanford and did postgraduate training at Harvard, and the UCLA School of Medicine, as well as a National Institutes of Health fellowship at the University of Washington School of Medicine. He came to the Medical School in 1976 as an associate professor and has been an attending physician at Memorial Hermann Hospital since that time.



Dr. Victor Lavis

- D. Brown

## DR. GROTTA STUDYING PROTECTIVE EFFECTS OF NEW STROKE DRUG IN CLINICAL TRIALS

Stroke, the third leading cause of death after heart attack and cancer, destroys brain cells. It may have met its antidote in the pharmaceutical Cerovive. **Dr. James Grotta**, director, UT's Vascular Neurology (Stroke) Program, is on the steering committee studying this promising new post-stroke drug in two trials, SAINT 1 (Stroke - Acute Ischemic - NXY Treatment) and SAINT 2, sponsored by the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca.

"The biggest advantage with a neuroprotective drug like Cerovive is that it doesn't cause bleeding, which is sometimes the case with tPA, a medication we presently employ with ischemic strokes," Grotta said. "Cerovive blocks some of the inflammatory responses in stroke. In animal models it's very effective."

"Because of the bleeding factor, some doctors won't use tPA. Neuroprotective drugs like Cerovive target the brain cells, not the blood-clotting system," Grotta added.

The theoretical advantage of neuroprotective drugs is that they could be used for other brain injuries, in addition to strokes, such as head trauma and drowning cases. By protecting the brain, they decrease disabilities normally associated with strokes, including



Dr. James Grotta

memory loss and speech problems.

Grotta, who also is the Roy M. and Phyllis Gough Huffington Distinguished Chair in Neurology, indicated that SAINT 1 in Europe has shown some promise. "For every 700,000 stroke patients in the U.S., and a larger number worldwide, a 2 or 3 percent increase in good outcomes could save thousands of lives," he said.

The SAINT II trial, which is just starting up in the U.S. and Canada, will study post-stroke patients over the next six to 12 months.

-C. O'Brien

### DRUG DISCOVERY INCUBATOR, CONT'D.

new techniques for drug targeting of different kinds of cancers. "This particular program," Stancel said, "is a training ground for both graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the broad area of drug design and development, from start to finish, no matter which area of expertise they might come from."

Two graduate students and a postdoctoral fellow from the Medical School are currently receiving funding from the project. They are: **Binbin Deng**, working with **Dr. Hong Zhou**, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, looking at AIDS virus drug targets; **Kendra Carmen**, in **Dr. David Loose's** laboratory, Integrative Biology and Pharmacology, looking at uterine cancer cells targets; and postdoctoral fellow **Zsuznana Nagy**, working with **Dr. Robert Kirken**, Integrative Biology and Pharmacology, looking at immunosuppressive drugs.

One of the aims of the study is that mentors and co-mentors will not only influence the students but will themselves work together in new and innovative ways, Stancel explained.