UC Irvine researchers share $57.3 million in awards

UC Irvine stem cell researchers Mathew Blurton-Jones, Frank LaFerla, Henry Klassen, Aileen Anderson and Brian Cummings will share in three California Institute for Regenerative Medicine Disease Team Therapy Development Awards totalling $57.3 million to treat Alzheimer’s disease, retinitis pigmentosa and cervical spinal cord injury.

More: stemcell.uci.edu
Photo by University Communications.

Discover

Autoimmunity disease drug created at UC Irvine receives Phase 1 clinical trial approval

Teach

School of Medicine, Australian university forge broadband videoconferencing link for medical education

Heal

Geriatrics program chosen among nation’s finest in latest U.S. News & World Report hospital rankings
Chandy’s autoimmune drug discovery cleared for Phase 1 clinical trial

Seattle-based biotech company Kineta, Inc. received regulatory approval for a Phase 1 clinical trial of an autoimmune drug candidate created by UC Irvine School of Medicine researchers. Physiology & biophysics professors George Chandy, Michael Calhan and colleagues created the novel Kv1.3 potassium ion channel blockers by modifying natural sea anemone-derived peptide inhibitors. This initial Phase 1a trial aims to assess the safety, tolerability and pharmacokinetics of a single dose of ShK-186 in up to 60 healthy volunteers. Kv1.3 has been a target of industry efforts for its role in instigating activation of effector memory T-cells, which are major mediators of autoimmune disease. The trial marks a milestone for the development of immune-sparing treatments for a spectrum of autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus.

More: www.physiology.uci.edu

Feelings return for paralyzed patients in stem cell trial

Two of three patients participating in the world’s first clinical trial for chronic spinal cord injury reported feeling increased sensation in previously paralyzed areas after receiving injections of neural stem cells. Six months after therapy, these patients experienced sensations of touch and heat between their chest and navel – areas previously without any sensation. Sue & Bill Gross Stem Cell Research Center scientists Aileen Anderson and Brian Cummings (pictured), in collaboration with StemCells, Inc., conducted the key studies for this neural stem cell therapy, which is being tested in a Swiss hospital. Ultimately, 12 patients will be enrolled in the Phase 1/2 trial, which is open to patients from Europe, Canada and the U.S. Work by UC Irvine researchers has led to the world’s two first stem cell-therapy trials for treating spinal cord injury.

More: stemcell.uci.edu

Stem cell researchers take part in CIRM award program

Efforts at the Sue & Bill Gross Stem Cell Research Center to begin human clinical trials using stem cells to treat cervical spinal cord injury, retinitis pigmentosa and Alzheimer’s disease received a $57.3 million boost from the state’s stem cell research funding agency, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM). UC Irvine researchers will share in three CIRM Disease Team Therapy Development Awards. Aileen Anderson and Brian Cummings and StemCells, Inc. received a $20 million to fund the collection of data necessary to establish human clinical trials in the U.S. for cervical spinal cord injury. Frank LaFerla and Mathew Blurton-Jones and StemCells, Inc., reaped another $20 million to advance research using human neural stem cells to improve memory in people with Alzheimer’s disease. Henry Klassen (pictured) and colleagues at UC Santa Barbara, UC Davis and Cedars-Sinai garnered $17.3 million to cultivate therapeutically potent retinal progenitor stem cells to treat the blinding effects of retinitis pigmentosa.

More: stemcell.uci.edu
UC Irvine, Australian university create broadband medical education link

The School of Medicine and the University of New England in rural Armidale, Australia, have signed an agreement establishing a permanent high-definition videoconferencing link (pictured) allowing the two institutions to hold joint classes and medical simulation training sessions despite a geographical separation of almost 7,500 miles. In addition to using the state-of-the-art broadband videoconferencing capabilities of the Medical Education Building, new equipment will be installed at both campuses to let students participate in joint, real-time courses held in Armidale and Irvine facilities. “Technology is on the forefront in our medical education program,” said Dr. Gerald Maguire, senior associate dean of medical education. “Together, we will be working to prepare today’s students to meet the medical needs of tomorrow.”

More: www.meded.uci.edu

Residents in urology, emergency medicine join innovative iPad program

UC Irvine School of Medicine's innovative iPad program is expanding to postdoctoral education. Resident physicians in urology and emergency medicine have been given these tablet computers loaded with their required textbooks and lecture materials. For the 18 emergency medicine residents, the devices also allow them to quickly access patient electronic medical records while on their rounds. Residency director Dr. Bharath Chakravarthy (pictured right) believes UC Irvine’s emergency department is the nation’s first to employ iPads, and, coupled with its innovative use of bedside ultrasound, this marks the future direction of emergency healthcare. The effort is part of the innovative iMedEd Initiative, in which the medical school is the first to integrated iPads and bedside ultrasound into the medical education curriculum.

More: www.imeded.uci.edu

White Coat Ceremony marks first steps for new medical students

On the evening of Aug. 3, the 104 students constituting the School of Medicine Class of 2016 formed for the first time to participate in the White Coat Ceremony before an estimated 650 well-wishers. The event is a both a celebratory and solemn rite of passage, at which these future physicians recited the “Oath for the Doctors of Medicine” and received a pin from the Arnold P. Gold Foundation for Humanism in Medicine to seal their commitment to provide compassionate and excellent care. The ceremony was only part of an orientation process that ended with the start of classes on Aug. 8. It was also a time when a diverse and driven group of men and women learned about each other and began to forge lifelong relationships and to help lead the transformation of healthcare in the U.S.

More: www.meded.uci.edu
“Paro” baby seals to ease pain and stress of chemotherapy

At UC Irvine Medical Center, oncologists are pairing robotic baby harp seals with women receiving chemotherapy to study whether the cuddly mechanical creatures can ease their pain and stress. Researchers plan to enroll 100 women during the yearlong study. Some will read, rest, play video games or watch TV during chemotherapy treatments, while others will be selected to interact with one of four “Paro” robots the manufacturer donated for the study. Research coordinator Anita Wallick will survey both groups’ anxiety, mood and pain levels for comparison. According to gynecologic oncology fellow Dr. Ramez Eskander, the goal is to find new ways to improve what the National Cancer Institute calls complementary therapies—those that enhance or support conventional clinical treatment. More: www.cancer.ucl.edu

Geriatrics program rated among the nation’s best in U.S. News rankings

For the 12th consecutive year, UC Irvine Medical Center has been ranked among the nation’s best hospitals by U.S. News & World Report. Its geriatrics program placed 55th among the country’s top 50. The program is a national and international leader in the clinical care of older adults. The SeniorHealth Center in Orange is staffed by an interdisciplinary team led by geriatricians trained to deliver primary care and offer consultations about specific concerns, such as frailty, memory loss, depression and falls. “We do our utmost to provide superb medical care in a loving environment,” said Dr. Laura Mosqueda (pictured above, left), chair of UC Irvine’s Department of Family Medicine, director of its geriatrics program and Ronald Reagan Chair in Geriatrics. More: www.healthcare.uci.edu/seniorhealth

Wing leading national effort to understand fetal growth risk factors

Dr. Deborah A. Wing, director of UC Irvine’s Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine, is leading several studies of fetal growth in singleton and twin pregnancies and premature birth in first-time mothers. The National Fetal Growth and NuMoM2b studies are sponsored by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development of the National Institutes of Health. “Developing accurate standards for fetal growth helps doctors recognize and decrease complications,” Wing said. “Understanding risk factors for premature births will certainly lead to improvements in prevention and treatment.” Wing is working with Dr. Michael Nageotte (both pictured), maternal-fetal medicine specialist and associate chief medical officer for the MemorialCare Center for Women at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center. He is also a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at UC Irvine. Enrollment information: call 714-456-6956 or 562-933-2755. More: www.obgyn.uci.edu
GHEI celebrates with Topping Out Ceremony

About 150 donors, doctors, employees and corporate and community leaders gathered to celebrate completion of the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute’s (GHEI) structural frame at a Topping Out Ceremony, held July 24 on campus, across from the new building. Thanks to a generous community, the university has raised $29.5 million of the $37 million needed to complete the 70,000-square-foot building. Construction has progressed rapidly since the April 7, 2011, groundbreaking, with the building set to open next summer. The GHEI will bring advancements in patient eye care and lead the way in interdisciplinary research for new treatments in other specialties as well.

From left: UC Irvine Medical Center CEO Terry Belmont, UC Irvine Chancellor Michael Drake, GHEI Steering Committee Chair James Mazzo, GHEI Director Dr. Roger Steinert, philanthropist Gavin Herbert, UC Irvine Campus Architect Rebekah Gladson and School of Medicine Dean Dr. Ralph Clayman.

2012 Calendar of Events

Thursday, Sept. 27
Dean’s Quarterly Lecture Series
Time: 5 p.m.
Location: Sue & Bill Gross Hall
Topic: From Mice to Men: Lessons from the Lab to Cure Paralysis
Speakers: Ranjan Gupta, M.D., Oswald Steward, Ph.D.

Tuesday, Oct. 2
Research Associates Fall Luncheon*
Time: 11:30 a.m.
Location: Arnold and Mabel Beckman Center
Topic: UC Irvine: On the Cutting Edge of Skin Research
Speaker: Kristen M. Kelly, M.D.

Tuesday, Oct. 2
Open house for UC Irvine students, faculty and staff
Stem Cell Awareness Day
Time: 11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Location: Sue & Bill Gross Hall

Wednesday, Oct. 3
Stem Cell Awareness Day Research Symposium
Time: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
Location: Sue & Bill Gross Hall
Scientists, advocates and supporters will come together to raise awareness and a greater understanding of stem cell research and the range of potential applications to possibly treat disease and injury.

Friday, Oct. 5
UC Irvine Outreach Clinics
2012 Annual Benefit and Wine Auction*
Time: 6 p.m.
Location: Orange County Medical Association, 17322 Murphy Ave., Irvine, CA 92614
Support the student-run outreach clinic by attending its annual benefit.
http://www.ucioutreachclinics.org/

*Fee Required
For additional information, please contact Carley Fox at 949-824-9157 or foxc@uci.edu.

The Dean's Report is published by the UC Irvine School of Medicine – Dean Ralph V. Clayman, M.D.; Assistant Vice Chancellor, UC Irvine Health Advancement Sue Totten; Executive Director of Development for the School of Medicine Teri Hauser; Alumni Relations Associate Director Carley Fox; editors Tom Vasich and Jenny Tim.
From the Dean

On the evening of Aug. 3, we welcomed the 104 members of the Class of 2016 into the UC Irvine School of Medicine at the annual White Coat Ceremony, a solemn and celebratory event where these future physicians make the life-long pledge to provide compassionate and competent care. I take great delight addressing these talented new students, and thus have provided my comments from the evening as part of this Dean's Report.

Sincerely,

Ralph V. Clayman, M.D.
Dean, School of Medicine
Professor of Urology

At the University of California, Irvine's School of Medicine, our mission is to Discover. Teach. Heal. Tonight we celebrate the Teach aspect of that mission, as we welcome into our midst the Medical School Class of 2016. In the ensuing four years, the goal of each faculty member will be to contribute to your education so you in turn can "pay it forward" as you proceed to discover new knowledge, to teach your fellow classmates and those to follow, and to heal the many people who will seek your counsel, your knowledge and your skill in their quest to regain their health in the fullest sense of the word. For as defined by the World Health Organization, health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but rather a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being.

Tonight, for you, marks the end of the didactic, textbook-laden hallmarks of the mass educational process. Education at UC Irvine's School of Medicine has entered the Information Age – and you will tonight have in your hands truly an "e" ticket to education. Tonight, each of you will be receiving a fully encrypted, HIPAA-compliant 16-gig 3G WiFi-enabled iPad fully loaded with the lectures and supporting materials for the first year of medical school. Also loaded on this tablet computer is electronic access to all of your books for the first year of medical school. These eTexts can be downloaded onto your iPad, diagrams can be expanded or contracted as desired, text can be enlarged, and notes can be taken, recorded and saved. Podcasts of lectures or even operations can be received and reviewed. In essence, present in this 7.3-by-9.5-by-.5-inch thick digital device residing in the pocket of your white coat is all the knowledge you will need to complete your first year.

So why iPads? Well, first and foremost is the beauty of presenting information on a tablet digital platform – you, the learner, can decide how you receive the material you need to master. You can read it, you can touch it, you can shrink it or enlarge it, and in some cases, you can listen to it – so regardless of how you find it most easy to learn, be it visual, auditory, or tactile … you can learn.

As you will come to know, the people of Orange County are a supportive and nurturing community. These iPads are a manifestation of their generosity and their faith in your future. The cost of purchasing the iPads was borne by the John and Mary Tu Scholarship Fund established in June 2010. Indeed, thanks to Mr. Tu’s vision and support, your iPad curriculum will continue throughout your four years with us here at UC Irvine.

Tonight each student of the class of 2016 has received an educational “scholarship” – one that includes both the iPad and all four year’s of your texts – indeed, your class is the recipient of a book scholarship that will continue throughout your medical education. This is but the first step along a path that I hope UC Irvine’s School of Medicine will travel, so that in the not-too-distant future, not only your books but indeed the cost of your tuition will be borne not by your family or yourself but by the society that will benefit from your future deeds. The goal is to eventually endow each of the 104 positions in our medical school class through the vision and generosity of the Orange County community. That is a long road to travel, but every great journey begins with a first step … and that has been taken tonight. Lastly, some may see this as a fad, as a gimmick, but I and many of my colleagues including Dr. Warren Wiechmann, who worked so hard to make the iMedEd Initiative a reality, see this as a tipping point. We truly believe this is the end of textbook-driven, didactic education and the beginning of a new age in which you will have at your fingertips 100 percent of the time all of the knowledge you seek to amass and all of the reference material you may ever need to be a superior physician.

To be sure, these are very exciting times and for all of us at UC Irvine. It is a privilege and a pleasure to be able to participate in them with you. May the coming years for you be ones of tremendous growth and learning. We are looking forward to celebrating your success.

Christina Tabit receives her first white coat from Dean Clayman.
Support

You can make a difference, join us today

It is the vision of the UC Irvine School of Medicine to become one of the top 20 medical schools in the country. This can only be accomplished through collaborative efforts of the school’s alumni, dedicated supporters, faculty and staff. In order to achieve this goal, we request your help and support to create a national model of medical education, while producing future clinicians, researchers and medical faculty who will shape the future of health and healthcare on a local and national scale.

This fall, UC Irvine School of Medicine is proud to launch a new annual fund, the 1896 Society. Named in recognition of UC Irvine School of Medicine’s rich history and tradition, with educational roots dating back to 1896 – and to appropriately pay homage to those who came before us – the 1896 Society offers you a special opportunity to support our mission to discover, teach and heal through annual gift to the Dean’s Strategic Fund. Your gift will allow the School of Medicine dean to immediately address the evolving needs and priorities of the medical school. You may also designate your annual gift specifically for research, medical education or clinical care. With your support, we can introduce cutting edge teaching technologies and provide scholarships to help attract the nation’s most promising medical students.

We believe that leading the way and defining a new model for medical education – a model that includes global and technologically advanced curriculum – will improve our students’ experience and, at the same time, impact the future of medical care. We invite you join us on this journey and support the 1896 Society. To become a member of the 1896 Society, please visit our website at www.som.uci.edu/alumni or call Carley Fox at 949-824-9157.

A way to give and receive…

That is what a charitable gift annuity can provide you and your family. You can be part of UC Irvine's journey to enter the ranks of top medical schools and, at the same time, transform weak dividends on financial investments into fantastic payments and added financial certainty for yourself. Here's how.

Take a look at your stocks. If your dividends aren't where you want them to be, you can use stocks to fund a charitable gift annuity. A gift annuity is a contract in which we agree to pay you cash at a fixed rate for the rest of your life. The payment rates are based on your age. They can be as high as 9.0 percent, and once you set up your gift annuity, your rate will never change. What's more, there can be significant tax savings for you. This plan also works well with today’s very low-rate CDs. Plan now before the year is over and get the added benefit of a charitable tax deduction on this year’s return.

To learn more about how you can receive reliable, fixed income that benefits you and, at the same time, fosters medical mastery and plants the seeds of creativity and discovery, call Roland Ho at 949-824-6454 or visit www.plannedgiving.uci.edu.

Shaping the future of healthcare

There are many ways to support the School of Medicine, from establishing an endowment or making a legacy gift, to naming opportunities or joining the 1896 Society. To develop an individualized legacy of support please contact Teri Hauser, executive director of development, at 949-824-7910 or thauser@uci.edu. For e-giving opportunities, please visit www.uadv.uci.edu/SchoolofMedicine or www.ucifuturehealth.com/Pages.aspx/School-of-Medicine.
Alumni News

True Anteater at heart

Dr. Rimal Bera is a true Anteater at heart, having completed his undergraduate degree, medical school and residency training at UC Irvine. He is currently a clinical professor of psychiatry & human behavior and specializes in adult psychiatry. The newly appointed School of Medicine (SOM) Alumni Board president shares his vision for SOM alumni with Dean’s Report.

What are your goals and vision for the SOM Alumni Chapter?

My immediate goal is to increase the SOM Alumni Board. I want the board to become a catalyst for energy, passion and creativity to advance the mission of the SOM. We are updating our national database of our graduates and want to reconnect our alumni. My vision is for the alumni to become a driving force in the growth of the medical school. The board will become an important source of support for the medical school dean and the chancellor of the university and will play a key role in enhancing the medical school experience for students.

Where do you see the SOM Alumni Chapter in five years?

I see the SOM Alumni Chapter becoming the key organization in the medical school, providing a supportive foundation for the school's mission: Discover. Teach. Heal.

What excites you most about being a member of the SOM Alumni Board?

As the board evolves, I see tremendous potential for it to introduce great ideas to our school—ideas that will help UC Irvine achieve the vision of becoming one of the top 20 medical schools in the nation.

How has medicine changed since you were in medical school?

Today, medical school is much more dynamic; it is an interdisciplinary approach to patient care. The ability to work within the framework of a team is a must for physicians today in order to provide the best quality care.

How can alumni participate in the accomplishments of the SOM today?

As alumni, we need to be strong advocates for the SOM in our communities. Volunteer when opportunities are presented to participate and support the newly announced 1896 Society, which is the marquee support group for the SOM. All gifts of any size will make an impact. I am an inaugural member of the 1896 Society. I sincerely hope each of you will join me in this worthwhile endeavor.

We want to hear from you!

We invite you to share your Anteater pride and accomplishments with fellow alumni through UC Irvine School of Medicine Class Notes. Visit www.som.uci.edu/alumni and click on “Class Notes.” Complete the online form and submit your note. It’s that easy.

Volunteer opportunities available at UC Irvine Outreach Clinics

Alumni wishing to donate their time and skills to serving the uninsured of Orange County, while also mentoring and training medical students, are invited to volunteer at UC Irvine Outreach Clinics (UCIOC), a student-run free clinic operating out of the Hurtt Family Health Clinic at the Orange County Rescue Mission’s Village of Hope. UCIOC is committed to delivering high-quality medical care to individuals who have limited access to health services and insurance. The clinic strives to provide comprehensive care to patients by offering healthcare services, wellness education, social services, basic medications, referrals, and, if patients are eligible, assistance in obtaining healthcare coverage. All UCIOC preceptors must be full-time or volunteer faculty or residents at UC Irvine Medical Center. Primary care physicians such as family physicians and internists who meet this requirement can sign up at www.signup.ucioutreachclinics.org. If you are a family physician or internist and would like to become a UC Irvine volunteer faculty member, please contact the volunteer faculty coordinator at your respective department. If you are a specialist who is not currently affiliated with UC Irvine, and you would like to offer your services pro bono at your office, please contact UCIOC at ucioutreachclinics@gmail.com.