Transforming Autism Care in Southern California

The UC Irvine School of Medicine received $14 million from the William & Nancy Thompson Family Foundation and the Children & Families Commission of Orange County to establish a comprehensive regional center for autism. Pictured at a Dec. 13, 2012 event announcing the new center are: Front row (from left): Kimberly Cripe, president & CEO, CHOC Children’s; Sandra Barry, chair, Children & Families Commission of Orange County; Nancy Thompson, philanthropist; Bill Thompson, philanthropist; Dr. Michael Drake, chancellor, UC Irvine; State Senator Lou Correa (D - Santa Ana). Back row (from left): Dr. Jay Gargus, director, Center for Autism Research & Treatment, UC Irvine; Dr. Ralph Clayman, dean, UC Irvine School of Medicine; Dr. Maria Minon, vice president of medical affairs & chief medical officer, CHOC Children’s; Dr. Joseph Donnelly, director, The Center For Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders of Southern California; Donald Cardinal, dean, College of Educational Studies, Chapman University. Photo by Carrie Rosema.
Moyzis study finds dopamine gene variant linked to human longevity

A variant of a gene associated with active personality traits in humans seems to also be involved with living a longer life, UC Irvine and other researchers have found. This derivative of a dopamine-receptor gene – called the DRD4 7R allele – appears in significantly higher rates in people more than 90 years old and is linked to lifespan increases in mouse studies. Robert Moyzis (pictured), professor of biological chemistry at UC Irvine, and Dr. Nora Volkow, the director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, led a research effort that included data from the UC Irvine-led 90+ Study in Laguna Woods, Calif. Results appeared online in The Journal of Neuroscience. The variant gene is part of the dopamine system, which facilitates the transmission of signals among neurons and plays a major role in the brain network responsible for attention and reward-driven learning. The DRD4 7R allele blunts dopamine signaling, which enhances individuals’ reactivity to their environment. People who carry this variant gene, Moyzis said, seem to be more motivated to pursue social, intellectual and physical activities. More: www.physiology.uci.edu

Piomelli autism study named a major research achievement of 2012

A study by Daniele Piomelli (pictured) identifying brain chemicals that improved symptoms of fragile X syndrome was selected as one of the 10 major research achievements funded by Brain & Behavior Research Foundation grants in 2012. Piomelli, UC Irvine’s Louise Turner Arnold Chair in the Neurosciences, and Olivier Manzoni of France’s INSERM found that boosting natural, marijuana-like chemicals in the brain can improve transmission between neurons and potentially address behavioral issues related to fragile X syndrome, the most common known genetic cause of autism. The study by Piomelli and Manzoni is among more than 200 supported by BBRF grants last year and is the only one in the top 10 based in Southern California. Piomelli is one of the world’s leading endocannabinoid researchers, and his work is revealing new treatment approaches for anxiety, pain, depression and obesity. More: www.anatomy.uci.edu

Lee, Sandri-Goldin named fellows of the AAAS for 2013

Wen-Hwa Lee, Donald Bren Professor of Biological Chemistry, and Rozanne Sandri-Goldin, professor and chair of microbiology & molecular genetics (pictured), were among 13 UC Irvine researchers named fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the world’s largest general scientific society. A total of 702 AAAS members are being honored this year for their efforts to advance science or its applications. New fellows received an official certificate and a gold and blue rosette pin at the organization’s annual meeting in Boston. Lee was selected for advancing the understanding of human tumor suppressors – including the retinoblastoma, p53 and BRCA genes – in the cell cycle, differentiation and genomic stability. Sandri-Goldin was honored for her contributions to molecular virology, particularly for shedding light on how multifunctional viral proteins commandeer host cell pathways to benefit viral replication. More: www.aaas.org
School of Medicine and Donald Bren School of Information & Computer Sciences students teamed up in the first-ever “app jam” designed to create Apple-based applications with healthcare utility. Nineteen teams of five to six students signed up to hammer out caffeine-fueled ideas over a frenzied week of collaboration, leading to apps that can remind users to take their medications, help patients better explain the basis of their pain to their physicians, and efficiently track patient medical histories, just to name a few. In a student center conference room on Nov. 19, the teams presented their products to judges from the UC Irvine faculty and high-tech companies (including Apple), with the top three teams receiving $1,000, $500 and $250 respectively as prizes. The team including, MD/MBA students Peggy Bui and Joe Hanson, (pictured) that created Life Buoy took home the top prize for an app that creates a network in which patients and physicians can quickly connect through their smart phones and tablets. “This is where medicine is heading,” said Dr. Ralph Clayman, dean of the School of Medicine. “Mobile medicine – using smart phones and iPads to access healthcare.” More: sites.uci.edu/imeded

Ultrasound program highlighted in AAMC magazine

The Reporter, the monthly magazine of the American Association of Medical Colleges, recently featured the ultrasound education program in the School of Medicine. With rapid advancements in ultrasound technology, a handful of the nation’s medical schools make ultrasound training a standard part of the curriculum. UC Irvine's School of Medicine offers a four-year fully integrated ultrasound curriculum – the only one of its kind in California. Students at UC Irvine have shown an extracurricular interest, organizing an Ultrasound in Medical Education Interest Group with guest lecturers and hands-on sessions. In February, the group hosted UltraFest 2013, a symposium during which more than 200 students from neighboring medical schools gathered to get hands-on experience with ultrasound devices. Students participated in workshops to see how ultrasound can apply to emergency medicine, urology, obstetrics and gynecology, surgery, anesthesia and cardiology.

More: www.meded.uci.edu

iMedEd Initiative named Apple Distinguished Program

The iMedEd Initiative – an innovative, one-of-a-kind medical education program in the UC Irvine School of Medicine based upon iPad tablet computing — has been named a 2012-13 Apple Distinguished Program. The iMedEd Initiative joins select programs that Apple is honoring nationwide as exemplary learning environments. The Apple Distinguished Program designation is reserved for programs that integrate Apple technology in education and meet criteria for visionary leadership, innovative learning and teaching, ongoing professional learning, compelling evidence of success, and a flexible learning environment. Started in 2010, the iMedEd Initiative is reinventing the traditional medical school curriculum. It was the first in the nation to build a completely digital, interactive learning environment — which includes tablet-based learning and portable ultrasound clinical training — and continues to lead in adapting emerging technologies for all aspects of classroom and clinical training. More: www.imeded.uci.edu
UC Irvine receives major funding to establish
The Center for Autism

The UC Irvine School of Medicine received $14 million from the William & Nancy Thompson Family Foundation and the Children and Families Commission of Orange County to establish a comprehensive regional diagnostic and treatment center for autism and to support campus research in this area. The Center for Autism & Neurodevelopmental Disorders of Southern California will bring a multidisciplinary focus on clinical care, education, research, advocacy and community support. It will be home to a team of experts in the field of autism and neurodevelopmental disorders, led by UC Irvine pediatric neurologist Dr. Joseph H. Donnelly, director of For OC Kids Neurodevelopmental Center. A separate, but related drug research program will take place at UC Irvine under the leadership of nationally recognized metabolic genetic specialist Dr. J. Jay Gargus, professor of physiology & biophysics and pediatrics.

“Thanks to ongoing Commission support and a tremendous catalytic investment from the Thompson family, the Center for Autism is engaging in an extraordinary collaboration that will soon expand and enhance local services,” said Dr. Ralph Clayman, dean of the School of Medicine. The Center for Autism will expand upon the services provided by For OC Kids, where UC Irvine and CHOC Children’s hospital, with support from the Commission, have been partners in improving pediatric care and addressing the developmental needs of children for more than 10 years. In replacing For OC Kids, the Center for Autism will build on this platform and offer a complete range of diagnostic and treatment services to children, adolescents and young adults from birth to age 22 years. More: www.thecenter4autism.org

Prenatal ‘dream team’
at UC Irvine Medical Center
saves high-risk pregnancy

When an ultrasound revealed an unusual mass growing in her unborn baby, Ashley Dunn went to see the specialists in high-risk pregnancies at UC Irvine Medical Center. Orange County’s only regional perinatal provider, UC Irvine is the only hospital that offers highly specialized care for both mother and baby under one roof. Dr. Manual Porto (pictured), explained that the growing mass on the baby’s neck was a teratoma – Greek for ‘monstrous tumor’ – and could complicate Ashley’s pregnancy. Within moments of delivery it would suffocate the baby, whom the couple’s two-year old daughter had named Wyatt. Porto, chair of the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, and two teams of obstetricians, surgeons, anesthesiologists, neonatologists, nurses and staff partly delivered the baby by cesarean section, then operated on him while he was still attached to the mother by the umbilical cord. The procedure would ensure Ashley’s safety during the delivery and give doctors time to secure Wyatt’s airway before he tried to breathe on his own. It was successful, and surgeon Dr. Gurpreet Ahuja removed the mass a week later. Wyatt spent a month healing in UC Irvine Medical Center’s state-of-the-art neonatal intensive care unit. Today he is happy and healthy.

“From the second we arrived at UC Irvine Medical Center until we checked out, the doctors and nurses were wonderful and took care of everything. We feel like we got the best care we could get anywhere,” said Ashley Dunn. More: www.obgyn.uci.edu
2013 Calendar of Events

Tuesday, March 5
Research Associates’ Gavin Herbert Eye Institute tour and luncheon*
11 a.m., Gavin Herbert Eye Institute, Irvine campus

Friday, March 15
Match Day
9 a.m., Medical Education building, Irvine campus

Thursday, March 28
Dean’s Quarterly Lecture Series
5 p.m., Sue & Bill Gross Hall, Irvine campus

Topic: Seeing is believing: New views on diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer
Speakers: Bruce J. Tromberg, Ph.D. & Rita S. Mehta, M.D.

April 2013
Autism Awareness Month
For more information, please visit: www.thecenter4autism.org/

Thursday, April 25
Stem Cell Art Exhibit and Reception*
5–7 p.m., Sue & Bill Gross Hall, Irvine campus

Enjoy a wine reception, meet the scientists and view the beautiful new collection of dramatic stem cell art on display.

Tuesday, May 21
Women in Medicine – Alumni & Student Mixer
5:30 p.m., Medical Education building, Irvine campus

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

Rally for Reunion 2013

When did you finish medical school? Was it 1963, 1968, 1973, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003 or 2008? If the year on your medical school diploma ends in 3 or 8, mark your calendar for the weekend of June 8 to reunite and reconnect with fellow medical school classmates. The reunion weekend will be a family-friendly event including activities for kids, a continuing medical education course, tours of the Medical Education building, an alumni reception and more. One way to help is to serve as a reunion representative, reaching out to others and encouraging them to attend. If you would like to connect with former classmates as a reunion representative or help out in other ways, call Carley Fox at 949-824-9157 or email foxc@uci.edu.
From the Dean

To start off the new year, Terry A. Belmont, CEO of the UC Irvine Medical Center, and I had our first address on the State of UC Irvine Health on Jan. 24. We discussed our achievements, opportunities and the challenges that lay ahead for the UC Irvine School of Medicine and UC Irvine Medical Center. The guiding strategies and themes were based on our strategic plan and our mission: Discover. Teach. Heal.

CEO Belmont briefly touched on the first strategy, advance clinical excellence. For the medical center, the average daily hospital census exceeded 300 from July-December 2012, which is 4.2 percent higher than it was a year ago. During this same time frame, physician patient activity increased by 12 percent. In addition, Care Connect, the hospital’s concierge program, has assisted more than 900 patients. Also, for 12 consecutive years, UC Irvine Medical Center has been listed among the nation’s best hospitals by U.S. News & World Report.

I then discussed strategy two, broaden the impact of our clinical experience, increase marketshare in Orange County and the region. We continue to be home to more than 94 best doctors, and the only Level I trauma center and American College of Surgeon’s accredited burn center in Orange County. Further, we have Orange County’s only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center, named for the Chao family. We continue as leaders in robotic and image-guided needle based surgery, and have established both a Robotic Oncology Center and an Ablative Oncology Center; the latter is the first of its kind on the West coast and focuses on image-guided, thermal-based tumor therapy using specialized needles.

In the area of research, our third strategy is advance premier research, identify and promote research strengths and develop disease-focused multidisciplinary and translational research. Last year, our researchers shared in $143 million in research grants with $90 million coming from the NIH. We are one of only 54 research centers in the nation to receive a Clinical Translational Science Award. This year, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine granted more than $35 million to UC Irvine scientists in ophthalmology and physical medicine and rehabilitation. We are in our third year of offering the UC Irvine Triumvirate Grant, involving a minimum of three principal investigators coming from different departments or different schools at UC Irvine – to date $160,000 has been invested, with $1.4 million in subsequent grants coming to prior awardees. Also, we created a UC Irvine/Long Beach Veteran’s Administration hospital grant, with three $30,000 grants to support collaborative research.

Our fourth strategy is education for the future – place UC Irvine Health at the forefront of medical education and provide outstanding educational experiences for students, residents, post-doctoral scholars and post graduates. We continue to be ranked among the nation’s top 50 medical schools according to U.S. News & World Report. We are the first medical school to develop a philanthropically supported, completely iPad-compatible curriculum. Our school’s USMLE 1 scores notably increased 23 percent in 2012. In addition, we are the first medical school on the West Coast to implement a four-year, diagnostic bedside ultrasound curriculum. The popularity of our School of Medicine continues to grow; last year there were 5,377 applications for 104 openings.

We are the first and longest, fully accredited Level I ACS Education Institute in California. We also received full accreditation by LCME and ACCME; furthermore, all 53 residency/fellowship training programs have full ACGME accreditation. Most recently, our school’s iMedEd Initiative received Apple’s Distinguished Program Award.

Our work is not done. Several goals within the strategic plan have been implemented for fiscal year 2013, including:

• Advance Clinical Excellence – Achieve Joint Commission reaccreditation and Magnet Recognition.
• Broaden the Impact of Our Clinical Expertise – Complete the build-out of the Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center and complete the expansion of the H.H. Chao Comprehensive Digestive Disease Center. Expand primary care.
• Advance Premier Research – Expand commitment to molecular and genomic medicine. Increase patient enrollment in clinical trials and refurbish MedSci I and II.
• Educate for the Future – Construct an ultrasound training site. Implement international scholarship programs to underserved countries (30-40 per year). Further expand the iMedEd Initiative (e.g., iPad curriculum, flipped classroom and open courseware).

As we continue to move forward and onward, I want to thank our faculty, students and staff for their commitment to excellence in research, education and patient care. In addition, many thanks to our alumni and community groups for their ongoing support of our school and medical center. Our good fortunes continue to rise…

With gratitude,

Ralph V. Clayman, M.D.
Dean, School of Medicine
Professor of Urology
The IRA charitable rollover

The IRA charitable rollover is once again an option available for our donors. Congress first made the IRA charitable rollover available in 2006, but only for a limited time. Fortunately, on Jan. 3, 2012, President Obama signed into law the American Taxpayer Relief Act (ATRA), which extended the IRA charitable rollover through the end of 2013.

The IRA charitable rollover allows you to make a distribution from an IRA directly to the UC Irvine Foundation. The distribution will be excluded from your taxable income for federal tax purposes and count toward your required minimum distribution. For a 2013 IRA charitable rollover, simply instruct your IRA administrator to make a gift directly to the UC Irvine Foundation (TIN#: 95-2540117) before Dec. 31, 2013.

Highlights of the IRA charitable rollover:
• Effective through Dec. 31, 2013
• You must be 70½ or older on the date of the distribution in order to participate
• Disbursements must be made directly to a qualified public charity, such as the UC Irvine Foundation
• You may roll over up to $100,000 per person
• IRA rollover gifts count toward your required minimum distribution for an IRA
• IRA charitable rollover gifts are not deductible

Make a difference, join us

Last fall, UC Irvine School of Medicine proudly launched a new annual fund, the 1896 Society. The 1896 Society was named in recognition of UC Irvine School of Medicine’s rich history and tradition, with educational roots dating back to 1896, when the medical school was originally founded as the Pacific Sanitarium and School of Osteopathic Medicine.

Since launching the 1896 Society, the School of Medicine has received more than $60,000 in donations. Thanks to support from alumni, resident alumni, faculty and friends, each year UC Irvine is able to educate more than 400 medical students and train more than 600 residents and fellows. 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. This can only be accomplished through collaborative efforts of the school’s alumni, dedicated supporters, faculty and staff. The 1896 Society offers you a special opportunity to support our mission: Discover. Teach. Heal. More: www.som.uci.edu/alumni

A special challenge grant

The UC Irvine School of Medicine has an opportunity to create an endowed chair in Medical Humanities in honor of Dr. Johanna Shapiro (pictured). This special chair, the first of its kind in our school, will be filled by a nationally recognized scholar and medical educator. An anonymous donor has offered a $1 million challenge gift toward the $2 million in funding required.

An endowed chair in medical humanities differentiates the School of Medicine and helps us in our goal of becoming a national leader in producing highly trained, skilled physicians who also provide the element of human kindness. To contribute to Dr. Shapiro’s chair fund, please visit: www.uadv.uci.edu/ProposedChairInMedicalHumanities

Shaping the future of healthcare

There are many ways to support the School of Medicine. To develop an individualized legacy of support, contact Teri Hauser, executive director of development, at 949-824-7910 or thau@uci.edu. More: www.uadv.uci.edu/Schoolof-Medicine
Alumni News

SOM alumnus elected to Congress

Dr. Ami Bera, UC Irvine School of Medicine Class of 1991, was elected to the 113th United States Congress last November. As a member of the Democratic Party, he will represent the California 7th District, which is in the Sacramento area.

Bera (pictured) was born in Hollywood, the son of parents who immigrated to the U.S. in the 1950s to attend college. The value of education and hard work was instilled at a very early age in Bera and his two siblings. Bera grew up believing that he lived in a land of opportunity where “if you worked hard and played by the rules, you could reach your full potential.”

Bera graduated from UC Irvine with a bachelor's degree in biology, then continued his medical education here, where he earned his medical degree in 1991. Bera was drawn to medicine by the opportunity to help total strangers and quickly form intimate connections with them. He believes that the listening skills required for a good bedside manner have served him well in politics.

As a second-year medical student, he met his future wife, Janine, then an undergraduate at UC Irvine. They married in 1991, the day after Bera's last medical school class. They have a 15-year-old daughter, Sydra, and they reside in Elk Grove.

After several years practicing internal medicine, Bera took on a half-time role as the medical director of care management for Mercy Healthcare Sacramento in 1998. There, he said, he learned the extent of inefficiency within the healthcare sector and set about identifying and implementing “simple solutions” to reduce waste. Realizing that other hospital groups in Sacramento County faced similar challenges, Bera took on the role of the medical director and chief medical officer of Sacramento County in 1999, where he was responsible for 1.3 million people. He was successful in creating the SacAdvantage Program, aimed at helping small businesses insure employees. He said he was motivated partly by a “desire to truly create that public-private partnership.”

After his role in county government, Bera entered academia as a professor and associate dean of admissions at UC Davis Medical School. But he remained interested in government, and in 2010 decided to challenge incumbent Rep. Dan Lungren. Although not elected in 2010, Bera began almost immediately to consider a second run. In Bera's second run for office in 2012, he put together the largest grass roots number of volunteers in the country. This energy carried him on to victory in November.

In Memoriam: Ronald Gilbert, MD

UC Irvine School of Medicine alumnus and friend, Dr. Ronald F. Gilbert, passed away on Jan. 28, 2013. Dr. Gilbert, 52, was a practicing urologist with Orange Coast Urology in Newport Beach, specializing in general urology, sexual dysfunction and related surgical techniques. He also founded and served as chief scientist of Absorption Pharmaceuticals, contributing to creation of the company’s flagship product, Promescent, a topical treatment for erectile dysfunction.

Longtime friend and medical school classmate, Dr. Donald Pompan said, “Ron was an outstanding urologist and human being. He had a sincere interest in medicine and helping people. He was a devoted husband and incredible father, who was very proud of his children. He was the model of how to live your life as a physician.”

Dr. Gilbert served as a volunteer faculty member in the UC Irvine School of Medicine from 2000-08 and was former chief of the urology department at Hoag. He was a diplomate of the American Board of Urology, a fellow of the American College of Surgeons, and a member of the American Urological Association.

Dr. Gilbert earned a bachelor's degree in biology from UC Santa Barbara, graduating with highest honors. He received his medical degree here at UC Irvine in June 1987 and went on to complete residencies in general surgery and urology at UC Irvine as well. Dr. Gilbert leaves behind a wife and two children.