Ferniany Returns to UAB as Health System CEO

New UAB Health System (UABHS) Chief Executive Officer I. William Ferniany, PhD, returns to UAB effective September 1. His goal is to partner with UAB leadership to make the organization one of the top 10 academic medical centers in the nation.

Dr. Ferniany, 57, a UAB administrator from 1988 to 1992 before moving on to key health care leadership positions in Pennsylvania and Mississippi, says, “We plan to leverage the university’s unique advantage in Alabama as an academic medical center — the interrelationship among research, education, and clinical care. If we align and focus these three areas we will reach our goal.”

He says he will spend an initial period at UAB “listening to as many people as possible to develop a ‘road map,’ then developing alignment of everyone in the Health System to make that road map a reality.”

UAB President and UABHS Board Chair Carol Z. Garrison, PhD, announced his appointment August 1. “Will Ferniany brings both a new vision for our system and an appreciation for its history and growth,” she says. “His experiences at Penn and Mississippi have prepared him well to lead a strong UAB Health System into the future.”

Dr. Garrison thanked Senior Vice President and School of Medicine Dean Robert R. Rich, MD, and his search committee for their work.

“We also owe a deep debt of gratitude for the exceptional leadership provided by Dr. Ray Watts as interim CEO,” she says. “UAB is so fortunate to have someone with Ray’s abilities willing to step in and shoulder this responsibility and do an outstanding job.”

Dr. Watts returns to his roles as president of the University of Alabama Health Services Foundation and chair of the Department of Neurology.

“With Ray Watts, Bob Rich, and Will Ferniany, we have a stellar leadership team in place,” Dr. Garrison says.

During his earlier years at UAB, Dr. Ferniany oversaw psychiatric services in the Department of Psychiatry and at the hospital before becoming associate hospital administrator for strategic planning and market development.

He comes to UAB from the University of Mississippi Medical Center, where he was associate vice chancellor and chief executive officer, responsible for the overall operation of the system’s adult and pediatric clinics, three hospitals (with a total of 777 beds), and a 430-member faculty practice plan, as well as the Jackson Medical Mall, which serves the uninsured in Hinds County.

Previously, he spent 14 years at the University of Pennsylvania Health Sys-

Nobel Laureate Sharp to Deliver Pritchett Lecture September 8

Philip A. Sharp, PhD, who shared the 1993 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for discovering split genes and RNA splicing, will deliver the 17th annual Paulette Shirey Pritchett Endowed Lecture in Pathology on September 8.

The lecture, “The Biology and Medical Promise of Small RNAs,” is at 2 PM in Margaret Cameron Spain Auditorium.

The prize was shared with Richard J. Roberts, PhD, of New England Biolabs in Beverly, Massachusetts, who independently made the same discovery. The Nobel committee called it “of fundamental importance for today’s basic research in biology, as well as for medically oriented research” and said it “has changed our view on how genes in higher organisms develop during evolution.”

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FERNIANY HEALTH SYSTEM CEO
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After retiring as CEO of Ferniany Health System, he continues to practice as a consultant to physician practices, which included more than 1188 physicians in the faculty practice plan and more than 250 in system-owned community practices. He also served as associate executive vice president for marketing and strategic support and was responsible for all marketing, strategic planning, and product line management.

Dr. Ferniany was on the faculty of the Wharton School, the University of Pennsylvania’s business school, and also taught classes at the University of Mississippi and UAB’s graduate program in health administration.

The Mobile native earned his bachelor’s degree in manpower and industrial relations from the University of Alabama and his master’s degree in hospital and health administration and doctorate in administration-health services from UAB.

Prior to his work at UAB, Dr. Ferniany worked for Healthcare Services of America, Southwest Alabama Health Systems Agency, and Bryce State Psychiatric Hospital.

“I am delighted to be coming back home to UAB,” he says. “UAB’s strength has always been a far-reaching vision coupled with a can-do attitude and a willingness to collaborate. That has not changed, and with discipline and teamwork we will take UAB’s already stellar reputation to even greater heights.”

PRITCHETT LECTURE
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Dr. Sharp is an institute professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research in Boston.

The lectureship is named for Paulette Shirey Pritchett, MD, a pathology department faculty member from 1975 to 1984.

ROTH APPOINTED PATHOLOGY CHAIR

Senior Vice President for Medicine and School of Medicine Dean Robert R. Rich, MD, announces the appointment of Kevin A. Roth, MD, PhD, as chair of the Department of Pathology.

Dr. Roth, who joined UAB in 2002 as director of the Division of Neuropathology, assumed departmental leadership on September 1. He replaces Professor of Pathology Jay M. McDonald, MD, who led the department for 18 years. Pathology ranks sixth in the nation in NIH grant award funding.

Dr. McDonald will remain on the faculty and continue as director of the Center for Metabolic Bone Disease and codirector of the Center for Translational Science Award, as well as direct his own research program.

“We are extremely enthusiastic about Dr. Roth’s vision for the department,” Dr. Rich says. “With his focus, energy, and resources, he is poised to lead it to an even higher level of accomplishment and esteem.”

“Our department’s recognized strengths in clinical service, research, and teaching — combined with strong connections with the School of Medicine and the UAB Health System — provide a solid foundation for future growth,” Dr. Roth says. “We are entering an exciting and challenging era. Changes in health care delivery, medical education, and research support will demand novel approaches and solutions to keep our department vibrant. My intent is to be proactive in identifying opportunities that will enhance our clinical and academic missions.”

Dr. Roth, professor of pathology, is the founding director of the UAB Comprehensive Neuroscience Center, established in 2006. He is editor in chief of the Journal of Histochemistry and Cytochemistry and a member of the Histochemical Society, the International Association of Neuropathologists, the American Society for Investigative Pathology, and the Society for Neuroscience.

The new chair earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan and MD and PhD degrees from Stanford University School of Medicine. He completed a residency at Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, Missouri, and joined the faculty there before coming to UAB.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCHER

PASCHE NAMED DIRECTOR OF HEMATOLOGY AND ONCOLOGY

Professor of Medicine and Spencer Chair in Medical Science Leadership, Department of Medicine, Edward Abraham, MD, announces the appointment of Boris Pasche, MD, PhD, a specialist in cancer genetics, as director of the Division of Hematology and Oncology, effective September 1.

Dr. Pasche also will serve as associate director of translational research for UAB’s Comprehensive Cancer Center. He joins UAB from Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois, where he was director of the Cancer Genetics Program of the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center and Feinberg School of Medicine and leader of the Cancer Genes and Molecular Targeting Program at the Lurie Cancer Center.

“Dr. Pasche is internationally recognized for his basic and clinical research on the genetics and treatment of cancer,” says Dr. Abraham, who lauded the service of interim Division Director Lisle M. Nabell, MD. “I am extremely appreciative of Dr. Nabell’s extraordinary effort and dedication in this post. The maintenance of investiga-
Dr. Pasche will provide the leadership needed to take scientific findings and move them rapidly to clinical settings,” says Comprehensive Cancer Center Director and Evalina B. Spencer Chair in Oncology Edward E. Partridge, MD. “His skill as a researcher in both clinical and basic science provides him with the broad perspective necessary to fulfill our mission of benefiting patients with our research.”

Dr. Pasche earned MD degrees from both the Karolinska Institute in Sweden and the University of Lausanne in Switzerland, as well as a PhD degree from the Karolinska Institute. He completed his internship and residency in medicine at The New York Hospital/Cornell University Medical College. He was on the faculty of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center before joining Northwestern University.

He serves on the National Cancer Institute Cancer Genetics Study Section, is a contributing editor to the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), and is editor of The Journal of Experimental and Clinical Cancer Research. Dr. Pasche is a member of the American Society for Clinical Investigation.

His primary research interests center on the genetics of cancer. He holds two NIH RO1 grants relating to TGF-β polymorphisms and breast and colon cancer.

‘A Genetics Treasure Trove…’

In a recent JAMA editorial (2008;299 [21]:2564-2565), Dr. Pasche commented on a study by Chang et al finding that a family history of colorectal cancer was associated with a significant reduction in the risk of cancer recurrence or death compared with patients without a family history of the disease.

He wrote: “If these intriguing findings are validated in other studies, family history may well become a new prognostic factor in colorectal cancer. Should this be the case, genome-wide association studies and tumor gene expression profiling studies will be warranted to identify germline and tumor-specific genetic features associated with a family history of colorectal cancer and favorable outcomes following adjuvant chemotherapy.”

He added “The study …suggests that family history of colorectal cancer will lead to the identification of novel genetic features predictive of response to chemotherapy. Familial colorectal cancer may therefore confirm its role as a genetics treasure trove for medical discovery.”

Alexander Named Editor of UAB Synopsis

UAB Health System Vice President and Chief Strategy and Quality Officer Scott E. Buchalter, MD, announces the appointment of C. Bruce Alexander, MD, professor and vice chair of pathology, as the third editor of UAB Synopsis. He succeeds Julius E. Linn Jr, MD, who retired after 18 years as editor. UAB Synopsis was founded in 1982 by then Assistant UAB Hospital Chief of Staff Richard B. McElvein, MD.

In this role, Dr. Alexander will oversee the continuation of UAB Synopsis as UAB Health System’s (UABHS) source of news, views, policies, and accomplishments and as an educational resource for physicians, residents, administrators, researchers, faculty, and other health professionals.

He has been elected to national offices for numerous organizations, including treasurer of the American Society for Clinical Pathology, a professional society that provides education, certification, and advocacy on behalf of patients, pathologists, and laboratory professionals, and secretary-treasurer and board of directors member of AΩA, the honor medical society. In addition, he was recently elected president of the Academy of Clinical Laboratory Physicians and Scientists, the national organization of clinical pathologists.

Dr. Alexander is UABHS Credentials Committee chair, senior scientist for the Department of Emergency Medicine’s Center for Emergency Care and Disaster Preparedness, and associate coroner and medical examiner for Jefferson County.

“Dr. Alexander has served faithfully on the UAB Synopsis advisory board for more than two decades and provided invaluable background and insight on UAB’s evolving story,” Dr. Linn says. “He will ensure that Synopsis remains an important resource for faculty and staff.”
Liver Awareness Day, Fundraising Walk

UAB's Liver Center and Liver Disease Support Group have two upcoming events.

Liver Awareness Day is set for September 12, 8 AM to NOON at Homewood Library, 1721 Oxmoor Rd. Staff from the UAB Liver Center and the Alabama Organ Center, patients, and others will present current information. The event is free and open to the public. Preregistration is requested (call 205.996.7378) but is not required.

The inaugural Liver Walk will be held September 13 at the Riverchase Galleria, with registration starting at 8 AM at the food court. Funds raised will help provide patient education in Alabama. Call 205.975.9698 to find out how to participate or contribute.

Med Link

The School of Medicine and the Health System jointly host Med-Link the first Thursday of each month at the Pittman Center for Advanced Medical Studies at 1924 7th Ave S. This casual meeting is an opportunity for faculty from the Joint Health Sciences, School of Medicine, and Health System to meet in a relaxed atmosphere after work for collegiality and refreshments (soft drinks, open bar, and snacks).

Reynolds Historical Lecture

“The President Has Been Shot and They Are Bringing Him to the Emergency Room” will be presented by Ronald C. Jones, MD, chief, Baylor University Department of Surgery, on September 25 at 5 pm at Margaret Cameron Spain Auditorium. The lecture is cosponsored by the Reynolds Historical Library and the UAB Department of Surgery.

Light the Night Walk

The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society will hold the 10th annual Light the Night Walk on September 11, at 6 pm, at Regions Park Stadium in Hoover. The casual walk is open to children, adults, and seniors. All registered walkers carry an illuminated balloon. Cancer survivors carry white balloons and supporters carry red balloons.

Proceeds from the event support leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma research. UAB Health System is an event corporate sponsor. To make a donation or to join a UAB Health System team go to http://register.lightthenight.org/LTNRegistration/app?page=TeamView&service=page&urlKey=UABHealthSystem.