IN MEMORIUM

Irene Preston Dortch, talented writer, thoughtful editor, and a creative force at UAB for 27 years, died August 12, 2006 of ovarian cancer. Irene was known across campus for her ability to capture the important stories, extract the key elements, and craft fascinating articles that brought UAB's message to numerous audiences through her work with The Beacon, Medical Center Magazine, UAB Insight, and UAB Synopsis, among other UAB publications.

Along with founding Synopsis editor Richard McElvein, MD, Irene was instrumental in starting UAB Synopsis in 1982 and continued in her role as Synopsis managing editor until her retirement in February 2006, following the celebration of UAB Synopsis' 25th anniversary and redesign of the newsletter. Synopsis Editor Julius E. Linn, MD, credits much of the publication's success over the years to Irene's keen eye for details, devotion to accuracy, creative layouts and designs, flare in getting the story's focus correct, and introductions that caught the reader's attention.

UAB Synopsis founding editor Richard McElvein, MD, says, “I consider Irene one of the founders of Synopsis. Her name was on the masthead of Volume 1, Number 1, and remained until her retirement. She worked tirelessly with me and produced superb material.

“A great writer, an exuberant personality and a wonderful smile. What a combination. Her sense of story and style was impeccable. Her awards were legion. She is gone but will not be forgotten.”

Irene was born in New York, received a BA degree, cum laude, from St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland, and an MA degree in cultural anthropology from the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. She completed advanced studies in art and language at Koln Universitat, Cologne, West Germany.

Under her direction, Medical Center magazine won four national Council for the Advancement and Support of Education awards. In 1992 and 1993 she received the prestigious Robert G. Fenley Science Writing Award of Distinction from the American Association of Medical Colleges, and three ADDY Awards for magazine publishing from the Birmingham Advertising Club. In addition to her work at UAB, Irene was an accomplished equestrienne.

“She was a consummate professional and her interview style made everyone comfortable,” Synopsis advisor Alan R. Dimick, MD, says.

Vice Chair of Pathology and Synopsis advisor C. Bruce Alexander, MD, says, “Irene was a truly sincere friend and colleague. Her interests and efforts in

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Quality Improvement

TKC CLINICAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

To identify quality improvement opportunities, The Kirklin Clinic® (TKC) Clinical Performance Team in 2001 implemented a system to measure adherence to selected criteria for evaluation and management of clinic patients with diabetes mellitus — one of the highest volume diagnoses at TKC.

Clinical performance measurements for TKC patients with diabetes include the percentage with: one or more HbA1c measurements in the previous year; last HbA1c <9%; systolic blood pressure ≤140 mm Hg or diastolic blood pressure ≤90 mm Hg at last office visit; at least one low-density lipoprotein cholesterol measurement in the past year; >1 urinary microalbumin test in the prior year or evidence of nephropathy; and a dilated eye examination or evaluation of retinal photographs within the previous year.

“This year, we have added measures for coronary artery disease and preventive health,” says Tammy Taylor, TKC continuous quality improvement coordinator.

The project's coronary artery disease benchmarks consist of the percent of patients with blood pressure measurement at last visit; those with systolic blood pressure ≤140 mm Hg or diastolic ≤90 mm Hg; one lipid profile in the past year; on antiplatelet therapy or stated contraindications; beta blockers for patients with a prior myocardial infarction, or stated reasons for not prescribing.

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IN MEMORIAM

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Irene had requested memorials be made to the UAB Division of Gynecologic Oncology or the Center for Palliative Care.

HEALTH SYSTEM LAUNCHES NEWLY DESIGNED WEB SITES

The UAB Health System (UABHS) Department of Marketing Communications has redesigned the UAB Health System Web site at its new address, www.uabhealth.org. The site provides more than 15,000 pages of information on diseases, UAB facilities, health care services, and physicians. New site features include videos, interactive animations, a new physician directory, and enhanced search capabilities.


“Our goal is to be the resource for reliable health information and UAB Health System services,” says Debbie Hunter-Snow, UABHS director of Marketing Communications.

“We have redesigned our site with the visitor in mind,” adds Susan Reid, UABHS internet marketing manager. “The home page fills the screen making more information available without scrolling. It has a cleaner look with more links to help visitors find what they need.

“With the site’s new look, features, and search capabilities, we expect the number of visitors to increase dramatically,” says Reid. In 1999, the Health System site drew fewer than 100,000 visitors. In 2005, the site logged 2 million visitors. “We project 3.3 million visitors in 2006,” Reid says.

Consumers Assessed New Design

“We received positive responses from focus group participants who tested the new site’s usability, graphic look, and new address, www.uabhealth.org, which proved easier to remember than the longer, more academic address,” Reid says.

“Because of focus group input, we changed navigational button names to better reflect their content,” Reid says. For example, Facilities is now Hospitals & Clinics, Clinical Services is Health Care Services, and Health A - Z is Health Library. To make related information easier to find, the site displays links to appropriate services, physicians, and information in the left sidebar.

Other Features

The Web site also contains a new user-friendly UAB physician directory, www.uabhealth.org/physicians, searchable by specialty, physician’s last name, full name, faculty, or diseases treated. Content for this site comes directly from the Department of Physician Relations’ database.

The health information videos have RSS capability, allowing users to download information to their computers or handheld devices equipped with a readily available RSS reader program.

www.uabhealth.org is powered by the content management system Estrada,® which allows anyone with a password to enter information into the site without knowledge of programming languages, such as HTML. This flexibility allows individual departments and divisions to maintain pages without employing a technical expert. Anyone wishing to build a portal on the site should contact Internet Marketing Manager Susan Reid by e-mail at sreid@uabmc.edu.

2006 SOM HONORS CONVOCATION

The UAB School of Medicine (SOM) Honors Convocation saluted 165 members of the Class of 2006 — 70 of whom remained in Alabama for their first postgraduate year training. Convened on May 21 at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center’s Concert Hall, the ceremony featured 1988 SOM graduate J. Michael McQueen, MD, an Enterprise otolaryngologist, as guest speaker. Class President John F. Simmons presented comments to the graduating class.

Bao Quynh Ngoc Huynh and Eric Lee Wallace shared the Medical Assurance Award for Excellence in Patient Communications, William Joseph Jenkins received the Hugh J. Dempsey Memorial Award for the graduating senior with the highest academic achievement; senior Bradley Harold Edwards and faculty member Michael S. Saag, MD, received the Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award from the Arnold P. Gold Foundation.

Richard Brown, MD, president of the Caduceus Club, a medical alumni organization honoring and supporting SOM faculty and students, presented Douglas C. Heimburger, MD, the best basic science professor award, and Craig J. Hoesley, MD, the best clinical professor award. Albert J. Tulley, Jr, MD, president of the Medical Alumni Association, presented Kira EdNita Fonbah the medical alumni award for leadership and community service.

Irene and her horse Emandar

Irene had requested memorials be made to the UAB Division of Gynecologic Oncology or the Center for Palliative Care.
UAB Health System Wins National Recognition for *ehealth*

The UAB Health System Department of Marketing Communications was the recent winner of the $10,000 Preston V. McMurry, Jr., Return On Investment (ROI) Award, presented by McMurry Publishing — the company that publishes *ehealth* in addition to newsletters and magazines for more than 100 hospitals across the country. The award recognizes the institution that does the best job tracking its publication’s success.

*ehealth* magazine is published four times a year to inform the public of UAB Health System services and programs. “This one publication gives us many benefits that could not be accomplished as efficiently and effectively in any other way,” says Crider. “We are pleased our magazine, *ehealth*, has played a role in improving the health of our community and that people are making healthy lifestyle changes as a result.”

*ehealth* is delivered to 100,000 Birmingham area residents. In addition, it is available in waiting areas and in brochure displays at UAB Hospital and at physicians’ offices. To receive a copy of *ehealth* magazine, call 205. 996.6000. For more information on UAB Health System, visit the Health System’s new Web site at [www.uabhealth.org](http://www.uabhealth.org).

**Stop Computer Data Theft:** What You Can Do

UAB Health System (UABHS) has launched an ongoing campaign to educate personnel on ways to prevent computer data theft. “Security is everyone’s responsibility,” says Terrell Herzig, UABHS Data Security Officer and UAB HIPAA Security Officer.

“It is imperative that patients and employees trust our ability to safeguard their sensitive data,” he says. “Even when technical controls are in place, each person is responsible for ensuring they are used properly.”

According to Herzig, UABHS Health System Information Services’ supported Centernet computers have safeguards in place to prevent unauthorized access of data, but he warns all users against storing protected health information or other sensitive data on local hard drives, on laptop computers, or on home desktop computers. In rare cases where sensitive information must be used outside a secure server environment, employees must make sure management understands the need and approves of the use. Once such a need is identified and approved, employees must use encryption software to adequately protect the information.

Herzig also stresses the requirement of encryption when using portable devices, such as portable USB flash drives also known as memory sticks, pin drives, or jump drives, etc.

In the event of theft of a local hard drive or personal portable device, encryption prevents access by unauthorized users.

“We are available to advise users on proper tools to secure personal computers and portable devices,” Herzig closes.

For assistance with computer security, contact Terrell Herzig by telephone at 975-0072, or by e-mail at therzig@uabmc.edu.

**Louisiana to Redesign Health Care System**

State, local, and federal officials are redesigning Louisiana’s battered health care system through the newly chartered Louisiana Health Care Redesign Collaborative. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt says, “…this is an opportunity to design and implement fundamental change in the financing and delivery of health care in Louisiana that could serve as a model for the nation.”

[www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=288](http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/offices/?ID=288)

To access a Synopsis article, visit our Web site at [www.uabhealth.org/synopsis](http://www.uabhealth.org/synopsis).
Independent scholar Edward T. Morman, PhD, will present “War and Public Health” on September 7 at noon at the Reynolds Historical Library in the Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences.

CLINICAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

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Preventive measures involve advice about tobacco cessation within the past 2 years, percent aged 50 and older who had influenza vaccination in past year, and percent of women aged 50 to 69 years who had mammography screenings in the past 2 years.

“Performance measures are based on established practice guidelines and are quantifiable tools used to calibrate quality of care,” says Taylor. “The clinical performance measures we have chosen are endorsed by major medical organizations.”

Taylor points to a 12% (56% to 68%) increase in eye exams among TKC patients with diabetes as one example of how the program has improved performance.

“With assistance from the Callahan Eye Foundation at UAB, we developed an eye examination template, created and distributed patient informational flyers in TKC stressing importance of eye exams for people with diabetes, encouraged physicians and staff to remind patients of the need for eye exams, and arranged for same-day eye exams at the Eye Foundation, as well as transportation if necessary,” says Taylor.

Implementing clinical performance measures not only improves quality of care, but also gives us a head start when Medicare expands its pay-for-performance initiatives,” says Taylor.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) plan to initiate pay-for-performance initiatives to improve cost-efficient quality of care for Medicare beneficiaries as well as promoting better coordination of care for people with chronic diseases.

Golf Tournament and Benefit Auction

Now in its seventh year, the UAB Hospital and UAB Emergency Medicine golf tournament on October 9, 2006, features first class amenities and prizes for hole-in-ones, including a Hummer and Hawaiian vacation. The benefit reception following the tournament includes buffet dinner, silent auction, exhibits, and a prize contest, where 12 finalists will vie for multiple prizes including the winner’s choice of a Hummer H3 or Cadillac CTS. The event supports the UAB Hospital Patient Assistance Fund and UAB Emergency Medicine Education Fund. For details and to register, go to www.uabhealth.org/golf.