A Southern Power is researching how to measure and produce energy from the wind given the fact that Alabama really is a low-wind area,” Shih says. “Still, it’s an alternate energy, and it’s an area we all believe is worth researching and investigating.”

Philpot, who closely follows technology developments that may aid Southern Company, says the fact a low-wind area location doesn’t mean the technology can’t — and shouldn’t — be pursued.

“I focus on renewable energies — wind, solar and hydro — and try to find technologies that will work in our footprint,” Philpot says. “There are other parts of the country where this might be more applicable, but this is not stopping my research. One day there may be a turbine that will be able to capture the wind here and harness it, and maybe it will be Dr. Shih and his students who will develop a blade that will capture more wind. There are a lot of positives here for us in working with UAB on this project.”

Designing the turbine

Nord already had worked on the project for three years before bringing it to the five-person senior design team he was leading this semester.

Nord began the project as a sophomore by using geometry-generation code to create a template for wind-turbine blades. Shih wanted to see how well the geometry code could be applied to certain applications and if it could be used to parametrically define the shape of a blade. Once Nord mastered that, Shih had him use the blade he generated and analyze it computationally.

Nord then began using the computational fluid-dynamics code developed by Shih’s research assistant and had him test the code in his wind-turbine research began to take shape.

A week or two after the class to work in my lab as a research assistant and had him test the geometry-generation software that we developed here,” Shih says. “I recruited him after the class to work in my lab as a research assistant and had him test the geometry-generation software that we developed here.”

Nord soon began working on the turbine-blade design using the software and performed numerous simulations. The project reached a peak this past week when a turbine designed, developed and produced by Shih’s mechanical and materials engineering students was mounted atop the 18-story Alabama Power headquarters building at 600 North 18th Street in Birmingham. The group, led by Nord, came together to complete the turbine for its senior design project.

The wind turbine was mounted on a pole April 28 and raised approximately 19 feet above the roof; it will collect wind and power data that School of Engineering and Southern Company researchers will be able to analyze.

The UAB 500: Hospital revs up for a different kind of race

Red Cross Racing and UAB Nursing Services with Dale Jarrett Racing Adventure

The collections during Nurses Week will help prevent shortages of blood during the early part of the summer that usually occur because of decreased donations.

UAB and the Red Cross partnered in 2007 to better manage blood use and ensure a ready supply in times of need. The hospital will use an estimated 30,000-32,000 units of blood this year — a figure that puts UAB in the top five among hospitals supplied by the Red Cross.

“If we don’t meet the donation goal, our per-unit cost of blood will go up," Marques says.

Blood products are used during surgery, transplantation, trauma care, difficult pregnancies and cancer treatment. A single patient may require as many as 50 units during the hospitalization.

“We appreciate the support our employees show during our blood drives,” Marques says. “The UAB community continues to increase its donation rate, and they are making a difference and saving lives.”

Platelets vs. whole blood

Many blood donors prefer to donate platelets instead of whole blood because they can donate platelets more frequently. Marques says.

“You can only donate whole blood once per eight weeks, but a person can donate platelets twice per week," Marques says. “And there are determined and caring people out there who have the time to donate platelets and do so regularly. They look at it as a way to help more people and help them faster.”

Platelet donations must be made at the American Red Cross headquarters at 1130 22nd St. South, Suite 100. Those who wish to donate need to inform the American Red Cross they are donating for UAB, and UAB will receive credit for the platelet donations.

A single donation of platelets can provide as many as five whole-blood donations. In addition, a platelet transfusion from a single donor greatly reduces the chances of an immune system reaction to the transfusion or transmission of disease to the recipient. Bone-marrow transplant, cancer and leukemia patients, whose immune systems already are compromised, particularly benefit from single-donor platelet transfusions.

A platelet donation can last up to two
Commencement to be streamed live May 8
Spring commencement at UAB will be conducted in two ceremonies Saturday, May 8 in Bartow Arena.
About half of the 2,388 spring graduates will participate. Ceremonies for the UAB College of Arts and Sciences and the UAB School of Education will begin at 9:30 a.m.; ceremonies for the schools of Business, Engineering, Public Health, Health Professions, Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing and Optometry will begin at 2 p.m.
Live streaming of both commencement ceremonies can be viewed at www.uab.edu/commencement

Navy’s top doc to tour hospital
The chief medical officer of the United States Navy will tour UAB Hospital May 6 and address faculty, students and staff during Birmingham Navy Week, May 2-9.
Vice Admiral Adam M. Robinson Jr. is the 36th Surgeon General of the Navy and chief of the Navy’s Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. Robinson, in town for Navy Week activities, will tour the hospital at 10:45 a.m. Thursday, May 6 and deliver his remarks at noon in Volker Hall. Robinson is the first African-American to become both Navy Surgeon General and chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. His specialty is colorectal surgery, and he has served in a variety of naval medicine and medical leadership positions in his 32-year career.
Pride, the Navy Band’s Southeast contemporary entertainment ensemble, will perform on UAB’s campus at 11 a.m. May 6 in the Mini Park.

SAS sponsoring school-supply drive for Haiti
Help the UAB Student Alumni Society collect school supplies to send to Haitian school children, who even before the earthquake had to share items such as pencils and paper due to limited funding and supplies.
Please donate items before May 7 by placing them in one of the collection boxes located on campus.

“Office Space” to open at VAG, reception May 12
Works in this exhibition will interrogate the notions and implications of the modern office worker’s cubicle, exploring the idea of office space through a diverse range of works including painting, sculpture, installation and video.
The exhibition will include works by John Polson and Gregg Myatt, among others. It is curated by Clayton Colvin. An opening reception is planned for 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 12 in the UAB Visual Arts Gallery.

Systemwide technology institute is set for May 18-19
The annual conference that focuses on using technology to facilitate learning will be held on the UAHuntsville campus this year.

There is no fee, but registration is required. Registration and program information is online at www.PCS.uab.edu/2010/technologyinstitute.jsp. At UAB contact Karen Shader at 975-6552.

Tickets on sale for Liza Minnelli
UAB’s Alys Stephens Center will present musical icon Liza Minnelli Saturday, Sept. 25 to kick off the center’s new “Alys Stephens Center Presents” 2010-11 season.
The full season of new performances will be announced Monday, May 3, when current subscribers will have the first chance to renew their season packages and purchase single tickets. New season packages can be purchased beginning Monday, June 7. Single tickets will go on sale Monday, Aug. 9.
For more information, call the box office at 975-2787 or visit the center online at www.AlysStephens.org.
This performance will be the first for Minnelli in Birmingham in 20 years. The city is one of just 11 stops to be included in her 12-show tour.
Sadowsky honored by peers for distinguished service

When Lionel Sadowsky, D.M.D., answers a question, his sharp sense of humor typically comes shining through. One of his favorite stories goes back to his days in his native South Africa. Sadowsky, an orthodontist, was explaining to a mother the work he was going to have to do on the mouth of her child. She listened intently as Sadowsky explained in detail everything he had to do. When Sadowsky finished, she asked him a simple question: “I understand. But are you any good?”

“I told her, ‘Sure, I’m good. Ask my mother,’” Sadowsky says. “I mean, whose mother isn’t going to say their child is good at what they do?”

Sadowsky, chair and professor emeritus in the School of Dentistry, actually is very good at his profession. He has been at the forefront of the orthodontic specialty since his arrival at UAB more than 30 years ago, conducting lectures, seminars and encouraging more rigorous education and training for future orthodontists at the national and international levels in addition to his teaching and clinical duties at UAB.

Now, the American Board of Orthodontics (ABO) has honored Sadowsky as the 2010 Earl E. and Wilma S. Shepard Distinguished Service Award recipient. Sadowsky was presented the award May 3 in Washington, D.C., at the annual American Association of Orthodontists national meeting. The intent of the award is to recognize achievement and encourage future efforts that advance the mission of ABO certification in the pursuit of excellence.

“It’s a very nice honor,” Sadowsky says. “It’s nice that your peers think enough of you and your work to recognize you in such a kind way.”

Sadowsky has served as chair of the School of Dentistry Department of Orthodontics and director of the advanced education program in orthodontics. He was academic leader in pre-doctoral education and graduate thesis supervision, and he served on the dental staff of Children’s Rehabilitation Services in Birmingham and was an orthodontic consultant for the Birmingham Veterans Administration.

Sadowsky retired from full-time duty in 2008 but still maintains clinical duties one day a week in the School of Dentistry.

“I still enjoy working with the students,” Sadowsky says. “I conduct seminars, teach them and carry out clinical supervision. And I annoy them a little bit also — tell them to keep the place clean, don’t break anything and treat everybody nicely. I’ve always believed if you treat every patient like a family member you’re bound to do the right thing.”

Sadowsky worked in general dental practice in South Africa and England before joining UAB’s faculty in 1976. Then School of Dentistry Dean Charles “Scotty” McCallum recruited Sadowsky and Alex Jacobson from the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. “I didn’t even know where the state of Alabama was,” Sadowsky says. “I had to look it up on a map.”

Jacobson and Sadowsky revamped the Department of Orthodontics upon their arrival, and it became an internationally recognized department.

Sadowsky says coming to the United States was one of the best decisions he ever made.

“When I spoke to my parents in South Africa about the opportunity I had to come here, they said if I didn’t go they would be disappointed in me,” Sadowsky says. “This is a great country — the most amazing in the world. They let people come in from anywhere and let you do what you want, and this is not the norm. When I return from an overseas trip, I really appreciate the immigration official saying, ‘Welcome home, sir.’ It really means something to me.

“This is a country of tremendous opportunity, and I don’t think I would have been given the opportunities I’ve had if I didn’t come here,” he says.

Sadowsky also is the editor of the international journal Seminars in Orthodontics. He says he intends to keep working as long as he can.

“I have a great feeling for this department,” Sadowsky says. “Something that you’ve helped develop and build — you want to keep it going and pass it along and let the next guys take it to the next level. And it’s nice to be working with smart young people and doing something good. I enjoy it.”

UAB 500

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Platelet donations are by appointment only. Call 1-800-561-5505.

Seminars in Orthodontics

AUB also has four early-bird special mini drives scheduled for June 17-18, Aug. 12-13 and Sept. 24, 27 and 30. Each drive will be from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

All donations from these drives will go towards UAB’s goal of 9,501 units.

UAB Reporter 3

May 3, 2010
Relief is available for those who suffer from hyperhidrosis

Swearing is an essential function of the human body. We need the release of the salty liquid from the body’s sweat glands to keep us cool when our body temperatures rise. Because sweating is the body’s natural way of regulating temperature, we sweat more when it’s hot outside. We also sweat more when we exercise or in response to situations that make us nervous, angry, embarrassed or afraid.

Some of us sweat excessively regardless of our circumstances or the amount of physical exertion we are producing. In fact, we could be at our desk typing, eating dinner at the kitchen table or walking down the hallway of our office with sweat pouring from our hands, face, arms and feet for what we believe is no real reason.

This condition is known as hyperhidrosis, or excessive sweating, and it affects an estimated 1 percent of the nation’s population, says Douglas Minnich, M.D., assistant professor of surgery and hyperhidrosis expert.

“There are probably many people who don’t recognize that this is a specific disease or that there are treatment options for it,” Minnich says. “Instead they just choose to deal with it, and it can have a negative impact on their lives. There are treatments available that can help with the condition.”

Medical treatments include antiperspirant medications, botex injections in the hands and iontophoresis, a technique where patients are given a small electrical charge through their hands as they soak them in water.

By the time Minnich sees a patient with hyperhidrosis they have exhausted all medical treatment options and are exploring surgical treatment.

UAB thoracic specialists perform most of the region’s surgeries for hyperhidrosis. The operation, known as a thoracoscopic sympathectomy, is a minimally invasive technique where the surgeon makes a one-centimeter incision below each armpit, enabling him to divide a portion of the sympathetic nerve — the nerve that affects sweating — inside the chest.

The operation is designed to help those who have excessive sweating of the hands, armpits and excessive craniofacial sweating.

“For those people whom medical treatments fail and feel like they’ve tried everything, they come in and ask if surgery is an option,” Minnich says.

One of the remarkable characteristics of hyperhidrosis is that the sweating can occur with no physical activity and regardless of temperature.

“I see people in the clinic who are just sitting there with me, and when they hold their arms out with their hands turned up, the sweat will start to run off kind of like a faucet dripping,” Minnich says.

An operation is 90 percent effective in relieving the sweating in the hands. Minnich says the efficacy goes down to approximately 70 percent for those who experience excessive sweating of the armpits. It is an outpatient procedure, and recovery time typically is two to three days.

Researchers aren’t sure what causes hyperhidrosis, but it is thought to be a type of dysregulation in the autonomic nervous system.

The concept of dividing the sympathetic nerve to relieve the condition has been around for nearly 40 years, but it used to be done with a thoracotomy to cut away the sweat glands and spreading the ribs to reach the nerve.

“Obviously many people looked at it and decided since it wasn’t a life-threatening problem, they weren’t going to voluntarily undergo such an invasive procedure with a huge incision,” Minnich says. “They’d rather deal with the sweaty palms. But in the past 10 to 15 years, we started developing the technologies of video-assisted thoracoscopic surgery (VATS). That enables us to make the small incision, put a camera in the chest and perform the operation that way. This surgery is the perfect fit for that type of technology.”

Historically, approximately 50 percent of patients who undergo surgery experience compensatory sweating after the procedure, typically on the back, thighs or legs. Still, Minnich says many patients still opt for the surgery if hand and underarm sweating interfere with their lifestyle.

Minnich also doesn’t want misinformation about the surgery on the Internet to cloud anyone’s judgment on the procedure. He says there are testimonials where people indicate they wish they had never had the surgery because they are now sweating much more in other places.

“I think most of those people probably had the operation, and it wasn’t their hands and armpits that were bothering them,” Minnich says. “I always stress to people in clinic that if it’s the hands that are bothering you the most, then you are likely to be pleased with the results of the surgery; if you have some extra sweating on your back after the surgery, you can take that because your hands are drier. Unfortunately some people that would be a good candidate for the surgery will read some of those things on the Internet and dismiss it. At least come in and hear it from someone who performs the surgery and get an opinion. I’m not here to talk a patient into or out of anything. I’m here to give patients information and help them make a decision.”

Minnich says non-operative treatments should be tried first before considering surgery. Most insurance companies cover pre-operative treatments and an operation, if necessary. Contact your primary-care physician or contact Minnich at dminnich@uab.edu or 996-9879 for more information.

Six receive MHRC awards for health disparities research

Faculty, staff and students from UAB and the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa were presented Charles Barkley Health Disparities Investigator Awards for best oral and poster presentations at the 2009 UAB Health Disparities Research Symposium held April 21, sponsored by the UAB Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center (MHRC).

Award recipients each received $200 for first place, $150 for second place and $100 for third place. Cash prizes were provided by the MHRC Barkley Health Disparities Fund, an endowment donated to the UAB MHRC by NBA great Barkley and designed to encourage research in health disparities.

Oral presentations

First Place: Dori Pikmezai, Ph.D., assistant professor, UAB School of Public Health, for “Developing and Testing a Culturally and Linguistically Adapted Physical Activity Intervention for Latinas”

Second Place: Shadi Martin, Ph.D., assistant professor, University of Alabama School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, for “Patients’ Right Not to Know: Exploring the Attitudes of Older Iranian Immigrants about Medical Disclosure of Terminal Illness”

Third Place: Virginia Howard, Ph.D., associate professor, UAB School of Public Health, for “The Contribution of Disparities in Stroke Incidence to the Disparities in Stroke Mortality: The Reasons for Geographic and Regional Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) Study”

Poster presentations

First Place: Krista Caussey, Ph.D., post-doctoral fellow, UAB School of Health Professions, for “A Dietary Intervention to Decrease Adiposity In Overweight Peri-Pubertal African-American Girls: Does Macronutrient Profile Matter?”

Second Place: Chelsea Marion, student assistant/intern, UAB College of Arts & Sciences, for “WALKFIT: Efficacy of Moderate Intensity Exercise in Promotion of Weight Loss and Prevention of Weight Gain in Young African American Women”

Third Place: Peter Merrill, B.S., UAB School of Public Health, for “Racial Disparities in Awareness and Treatment of Atrial Fibrillation: The Reasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) Study”
Quick-thinking clinic staff saves patient during phone call

Tuesday, March 23 was a pretty routine morning for Judd Smith. As usual, he was the only person in that early at Shankenstein Racing, the automotive shop where he works in Hueytown. No one else would be in for another two hours.

Smith picked up the phone to call the UAB Health Center Hueytown to see about making an appointment. He had a history of seizures and had been off his medication for several years. It was only a matter of time before the next seizure hit, he thought. Besides, at 41, it was time to have a regular doctor.

Amy Taft was having a normal morning, too. She’s a patient scheduler at the Hueytown Health Center and took Judd’s call. It was the usual routine new patient call … yet some background: check the scheduling book. But then, suddenly, things changed.

Smith wasn’t there anymore.

The line was still open, but Smith wasn’t saying anything. No response, no movement, nothing. Taft hadn’t heard a commotion, no sound of falling. Maybe — just maybe, she could hear light breathing.

Cheryl Ryland works next to Taft in the clinic, and she heard the concern in her voice: “My caller’s gone! He won’t answer!”

Had he changed his mind? That did happen sometimes. A caller decides maybe they don’t need a doctor after all. But the line was still open. Something must be wrong. Ryland called 9-1-1, and they gave the dispatcher the number where the call originated. Taft stayed on the line hoping Smith was all right.

He wasn’t.

Smith had had a seizure and collapsed all alone on the cold, hard shop floor. Ryland told Taft that Hueytown Fire Department EMTs were on the way. Taft heard them force their way into the shop. One picked up the phone and told her they’d found Smith unresponsive on the floor, but they had the situation in hand. And thanks for the alert.

Taft’s phone rang again late that afternoon. It was Smith. “One minute I’m on the phone making a doctor appointment and the next I wake up in a hospital,” he said. “Not quite what I’d had in mind. I had to call the Hueytown clinic and find out what happened. To find out if they’d called 9-1-1 for me.”

The story has a happy ending, of course. Smith was treated and released from the hospital, and he got his appointment with a doctor. He’s back on the seizure medicine and getting regular care from Jonathan Mize, M.D., at the UAB Health Center Hueytown.

Taft and Ryland were a little numb after it all happened, but now they have a pretty good story to tell. And they have a new friend in Smith.

“It couldn’t have worked out any better for me,” said Smith. “I think I’ll live forever now that I’ve got those folks to keep an eye on me!”

Rolling clinic delivers health care to uninsured patients

Monica Newton, D.O., doesn’t make house calls. But her Family Doc in a Bus program might be the next best thing. Twice a month for a year, she climbed into an RV and hit the road to bring medical care to uninsured residents of Selma and Dallas County.

Newton, an assistant professor of family medicine in the UAB School of Medicine Selma Family Medicine Residency Program, says the idea for the program came to her through her office window. “I would see an RV parked in the lot at the Dallas County Health Department across the street,” she recalls. “I kept thinking about what we could do as a residency program to reach out and connect with our community in need.”

Supported by partners statewide, the UAB School of Medicine Selma Family Medicine Residency purchased and equipped a 33-foot RV trailer as a mobile family-practice clinic, with three exam rooms and a lab. Family Doc in a Bus saw its first patient in September 2008. Since then, the rolling clinic has made more than 20 trips, treated more than 350 patients in more than 600 patient visits and provided a wide range of care from cancer screenings and ophthalmology services to treatment for diabetes, hypertension and obesity.

Since its beginning, the initiative has been a community effort that expanded and evolved. Newton says Community volunteers have joined faculty to staff the program. The local Lions Club sponsors vision screenings, and the Salvation Army and Christian Alliance Food Bank have taken turns offering their parking lots and air-conditioned lobbies to the mobile clinic. “We also have local pastors and ministers who help if patients have spiritual needs,” Newton says.

This past summer, the Edmonite Missions offered a building in downtown Selma for a permanent, off-road location for the weekly clinic. The RV will roll on, however; Newton plans to take it to sites throughout Dallas County, perhaps every other month.
Carol Humber came to work at UAB almost 25 years ago as a temporary employee in the Center for Developmental and Learning Disorders, now known as the Sparks Center.

She hoped the position would lead to full-time work somewhere on campus, but didn’t know what the future held.

“I always tried to put my best foot forward, worked hard and treated people like I wanted to be treated.” Humber says. “I tried to show respect and kindness, because it always comes back to you.”

Those characteristics have carried Humber through positions in Purchasing and the Vice President’s Office to her current post as administrative associate in the Division of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology. Co-workers praise Humber’s thoughtfulness and her communication and problem-solving skills as a few of the reasons she is a worthy selection as April’s Employee of the Month.

“Mrs. Humber is without question one of the most dedicated and thoughtful employees I have worked with during my many years as a research scientist and a physician,” says John Mountz, M.D., Ph.D., professor of clinical immunology and rheumatology and Humber’s supervisor. Humber coordinates numerous duties for Mountz and Associate Professor Hui-Chen Hsu, Ph.D. She supervises one administrative employee and takes supervisory responsibility as necessary for Mountz’ research staff to ensure efficient operation of his laboratory. She also performs a number of administrative functions for a number of people in the lab, including research technicians, students on rotation and postdoctoral fellows.

“Her workload is enormous, but she carries out these duties with the highest degree of skill, speed, commitment, reliability, and an unfailingly positive attitude,” Mountz says.

Mountz is the co-director of the Center for Aging Basic Biology and for the Bone Sparks Center.

“Mrs. Humber is one of the most consistent and persistent employees in the division. Humber’s co-workers do their best to assure her when she needs it, too. Humber recently missed a week of work after her husband Joe had major surgery at UAB Highlands, and she says others on the division stepped in to help while she was away.”

“I love the people here,” Humber says. “They’re family.”

Humber key to success for Immunology/Rheumatology

Carol Humber is the full package. She’s considerate of others, respectful and has great communication and problem-solving skills. These qualities, and others, have earned her the honor of being April’s Employee of the Month. If you know someone who has the project concept to the computational engineering students, we made our first baby turbine.

“Had I never done this before, so it was interesting to see it come to life;” Metzger says. “The other team members, I don’t want to say they had doubts, but they were curious how it would work considering how weak the balsa wood is. When you put the fiberglass on, it’s really a ‘wow’ moment when you see how strong it is.”

With help from teammates and mechanical engineering students Danielle Caren and Christopher Yancey, the group manufactured a set of three blades. It took more than one iteration of different designs for varying the parameters. Shih says. “By changing the parameters, you can come up with a different blade design. From the simulation of these blade designs, you will then be able to figure out which one performs better — at least in theory.”

Nord chose the best-performing blade design and assembled a group of other students for the senior design project. Now that they had the geometry and definition of the blade, they needed to actually make one.

Collin Metzger, a student in materials engineering, was part of Nord’s team and had to discern which materials were best to build the turbine and blades. Choosing the steel pole and aluminum hub for the base was the easy part, he says, but deciding what to use to build the blades was tricky. Metzger initially chose foam, but balsa wood could be cut and shaped better by the School of Engineering CNC machines. He then took glass fiber that has the consistency of cloth and wrapped it around the balsa wood blade before using a resin to saturate the glass fiber. When it was cured, they had their fiberglass-reinforced blades with balsa wood core.

“This is not a one-shot deal;” Swartz says. “We’ll be able to continue to refine and research wind turbines, says Steve Swartz, building facilities manager at Alabama Power.

“Future work will continue”

Also this month, Shih had to get FAA approval to put the turbine on its roof because the building is in the flight path to the Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport. The company also had to get approval from the City of Birmingham for a wind turbine measures close to a 46-inch swept diameter. Nord says seeing the project from its beginning to this point has been an important learning experience for him.

“I have had the opportunity to learn all of the different aspects of the project, from the conceptualization to the computational testing to the actual construction,” Nord says. “Having been a part of all of the steps along the way has been really beneficial and helped in my decision-making and design approach. And to have the assistance and help of Southern Company is invaluable.”

This is our first attempt in wind-turbine design, and there certainly are many things that we have to learn from failures;” Shih adds. “But with this energetic team of engineering students, we made our first baby step.”
New drug may treat CF, other genetic disorders

Inherited diseases such as cystic fibrosis can be caused by genetic “nonsense mutations” that disrupt the way human cells make proteins. David Bedwell, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Microbiology, says scientists now are closer to producing drugs that will fix this disruption and dramatically improve treatment of genetic disease.

Bedwell recently presented recent findings on an experimental drug — ataluren — that may help to treat cystic fibrosis and also holds promise in treating more than 2,400 different genetic disorders caused by nonsense mutations. Ataluren is being tested in humans for its effectiveness in treating Duchenne/Becker muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, hemophilia A, hemophilia B and other conditions. The agent works in an oral form.

Gulf oil spill endangers four-year fight to save turtle population

The growing oil slick in the Gulf of Mexico could void years of conservation work to save a species of turtle that calls the Alabama Gulf Coast home, say the UAB biologists who are behind the effort. “Any community of organisms in the path of that spreading oil slick is in danger, and that is especially the case for a species like the Diamondback Terrapin Terrapin terrapin that is teetering on the brink of extinction in Alabama,” says Thane Wibbels, Ph.D., the UAB biologist leading efforts to save the terrapin. “At this point, it is too difficult to predict the exact outcome of the spill.” Wibbels says, “But pending the stoppage of the oil slick before it reaches the coastline, the potential outcomes are all certainly negative as they relate to the future health of the Cedar Point Marsh, the terrapin population and other species.”

UAB first to make match on national research registry

UAB infectious-disease expert Craig Hoesley, M.D., is the first researcher in the nation successfully to recruit study volunteers through ResearchMatch.org. The free, Web-based tool pairs individuals willing to learn about research studies with researchers seeking volunteers.

Participants are eager to take part; of the 165 eligible subjects receiving an online recruitment message for Hoesley’s study, 30 agreed to be contacted. UAB researchers can visit www.researchmatch.org to register to use this new tool.

Biomarkers may aid in colorectal cancer treatment prognosis

UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center researchers have discovered a set of four biomarkers that will help predict which patients are more likely to develop aggressive colorectal cancer and which are not. The findings also shed light on the genetics that result in worse colorectal cancer-treatment outcomes for African-Americans, compared with Caucasians, the researchers said.

Liselle Bovell, a graduate student working in the laboratory of Associate Professor of Pathology Upender Manne, Ph.D., discovered that patients who tested positive for higher levels of a genetic biomarker called microRNA had increased risk of death after being treated for colorectal cancer.

Heel-stick blood test weak for diagnosing CMV in newborns

DNA analysis of dried blood samples routinely collected from newborns by a heel-stick procedure is not as effective as the currently used saliva or urine culture in screening for cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection, a major cause of hearing loss in children, according to a UAB study published in the April 14 issue of JAMA.

“The results of our study underscore the need for further evaluation of high-throughput methods performed on saliva or other specimens that can be adapted to large-scale newborn CMV screening,” said co-principal investigator Karen Fowler, Dr.Ph., professor of medicine in the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases.

Female med residents delay childbearing to complete training

Female medical residents are more likely than their male counterparts to delay having children for fear of jeopardizing their career, according to results of a study by UAB researchers published in the April issue of Academic Medicine.

“We found that women residents, significantly more than their male counterparts, plan to delay childbear- ing until their residency is complete,” said the study’s lead author Lisa Willett, M.D., associate professor of medicine and associate director of the internal medicine residency program in the UAB Division of General Internal Medicine.

“And we were able to find that their reasons for postponement were related to what they perceived as threats to their career.” Willett and study co-author Melissa Welbourn, M.D., a fellow in the UAB Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism, explain more in a video at www.uab.edu/news.

Urgent need for new antibiotics, infection specialist says

Deaths and suffering caused by antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections continue to rise around the world, and now is the time to support a global commitment to develop 10 new antibiotics by 2020, says Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) President Richard Whitely, M.D., a renowned researcher and infectious disease physician at UAB.

Whitely, director of UAB’s Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, makes a worldwide appeal to support IDSA’s new campaign, called the 10 x ’20 initiative, in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention new Safe Healthcare blog at http://blogs.cdc.gov/safehealthcare. Whitely’s April 29 blog post outlines the dangers of antibiotic resistance and makes recommendations for addressing what has become one of the greatest threats to human health.

“There are few antibiotics in the pipeline that would offer benefits over existing drugs,” Whitely writes in his post. “The existing drugs we do have are in danger of becoming ineffective as bacteria increasingly develop resistance, threatening to leave us without the tools we need to effectively treat patients.

Research training program starts May 4

This workshop will provide study coordinators with the basics of good clinical practice, research compliance and other key topics. This is a six-session course to be held May 4, 11, 25 and 26 and June 1 and 8. Sessions are from 8 a.m. to noon in the Children’s Harbor Bradley Conference Center; cost is $75 and payable with registration. Enrollment is limited, so please register early.

Direct questions to Susan Branscum at sbranscum@uab.edu, Sherre Carter at sheree@uab.edu, Penny Jester at pjester@uads.uab.edu or Kathleen Powell at kpowell@uab.edu.

Neuropsychology of primary brain tumors is focus of lecture

A Neuropsychology Grand Rounds lecture will examine the neuropsychology of primary brain tumors, presented as part of Brain Tumor Awareness Month in May.

Christina A. Meyers, Ph.D., ABPP, professor of neuro-ontology and chief of the Section on Neuropsychology at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, will discuss some of the common symptoms experienced by patients, and present information on the effects of treatment on cognition and how interventions can improve patient’s quality of life.

The lecture is from 8 to 9 a.m. Tuesday, May 18 in West Pavilion Conference Center Room E.

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The Benevolent Fund is UAB’s system for supporting charitable, service and health agencies by providing a mechanism for employees to help those in need in the Birmingham area.

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