E-cigarettes are designed to deliver a nicotine fix without the cancer-causing tar, various chemicals and smelly, toxic smoke that come with traditional tobacco cigarettes. But that doesn’t mean you should rush out and buy some. “It’s clearly less of a toxic substance, but that doesn’t make it a good thing,” said William Bailey, M.D., William Bailey, M.D., director of the MHRC. "This is less dangerous than smoking cigarettes," he says. "It's clearly less of a toxic substance, but that doesn't make it a good thing." Cherie says that for her, “it’s sort of like using a nicotine patch,” but with a pacifier effect that helps her for the time being: “It seems like a good alternative until I can quit.” Users can buy nicotine cartridges in different strengths, much like nicotine gum and patches, so she can step down gradually. "They go all the way down to zero," she says. That pacifier effect is what Bailey fears could perpetuate the two hardest habits for smokers to break: having a cigarette smoke and searching for a less toxic, less offensive substitute in the interim. The basic e-cigarette design has a tan mouthpiece designed to look like a cigarette’s filter and an LED light on the tip that can glow when active. When a smoker breathes in, a battery-powered internal atomizer creates a water vapor that draws nicotine into the mouth from a replaceable cartridge.

No consequences?

E-cigarettes are designed to deliver a nicotine fix without the cancer-causing tar, various chemicals and smelly, toxic smoke that come with traditional tobacco cigarettes. Although nicotine is certainly highly addictive and consticts blood vessels, among other effects, it is not considered a major health threat to otherwise healthy people. Still, UAB pulmonologist William Bailey, M.D., says he doesn’t like the concept of e-cigarettes at all. “This is less dangerous than smoking cigarettes,” he says. "It seems like a good alternative until I can quit.” Users can buy nicotine cartridges in different strengths, much like nicotine gum and patches, so she can step down gradually. "They go all the way down to zero,” he says.

That pacifier effect is what Bailey fears could perpetuate the two hardest habits for smokers to break: having a cigarette smoke and searching for a less toxic, less offensive substitute in the interim. The basic e-cigarette design has a tan mouthpiece designed to look like a cigarette’s filter and an LED light on the tip that can glow when active. When a smoker breathes in, a battery-powered internal atomizer creates a water vapor that draws nicotine into the mouth from a replaceable cartridge.

No consequences?

E-cigarettes are designed to deliver a nicotine fix without the cancer-causing tar, various chemicals and smelly, toxic smoke that come with traditional tobacco cigarettes. Although nicotine is certainly highly addictive and consticts blood vessels, among other effects, it is not considered a major health threat to otherwise healthy people. Still, UAB pulmonologist William Bailey, M.D., says he doesn’t like the concept of e-cigarettes at all. “This is less dangerous than smoking cigarettes,” he says. "It seems like a good alternative until I can quit.” Users can buy nicotine cartridges in different strengths, much like nicotine gum and patches, so she can step down gradually. "They go all the way down to zero,” he says.

That pacifier effect is what Bailey fears could perpetuate the two hardest habits for smokers to break: having a cigarette smoke and searching for a less toxic, less offensive substitute in the interim. The basic e-cigarette design has a tan mouthpiece designed to look like a cigarette’s filter and an LED light on the tip that can glow when active. When a smoker breathes in, a battery-powered internal atomizer creates a water vapor that draws nicotine into the mouth from a replaceable cartridge.

No consequences?

E-cigarettes are designed to deliver a nicotine fix without the cancer-causing tar, various chemicals and smelly, toxic smoke that come with traditional tobacco cigarettes. Although nicotine is certainly highly addictive and consticts blood vessels, among other effects, it is not considered a major health threat to otherwise healthy people. Still, UAB pulmonologist William Bailey, M.D., says he doesn’t like the concept of e-cigarettes at all. “This is less dangerous than smoking cigarettes,” he says. "It seems like a good alternative until I can quit.” Users can buy nicotine cartridges in different strengths, much like nicotine gum and patches, so she can step down gradually. "They go all the way down to zero,” he says.

That pacifier effect is what Bailey fears could perpetuate the two hardest habits for smokers to break: having a cigarette smoke and searching for a less toxic, less offensive substitute in the interim. The basic e-cigarette design has a tan mouthpiece designed to look like a cigarette’s filter and an LED light on the tip that can glow when active. When a smoker breathes in, a battery-powered internal atomizer creates a water vapor that draws nicotine into the mouth from a replaceable cartridge.

No consequences?

E-cigarettes are designed to deliver a nicotine fix without the cancer-causing tar, various chemicals and smelly, toxic smoke that come with traditional tobacco cigarettes. Although nicotine is certainly highly addictive and consticts blood vessels, among other effects, it is not considered a major health threat to otherwise healthy people. Still, UAB pulmonologist William Bailey, M.D., says he doesn’t like the concept of e-cigarettes at all. “This is less dangerous than smoking cigarettes,” he says. "It seems like a good alternative until I can quit.” Users can buy nicotine cartridges in different strengths, much like nicotine gum and patches, so she can step down gradually. "They go all the way down to zero,” he says.

That pacifier effect is what Bailey fears could perpetuate the two hardest habits for smokers to break: having a cigarette smoke and searching for a less toxic, less offensive substitute in the interim. The basic e-cigarette design has a tan mouthpiece designed to look like a cigarette’s filter and an LED light on the tip that can glow when active. When a smoker breathes in, a battery-powered internal atomizer creates a water vapor that draws nicotine into the mouth from a replaceable cartridge.
Four receive Barkley Health Disparities Research Awards

Four UAB faculty have been chosen to receive 2010 Charles Barkley Health Disparities Research Awards from the UAB Minority Health & Health Disparities Research Center to enable them to launch pilot studies seeking to improve minority health across the Deep South and United States.

The $30,000 awards will be presented Friday, Sept. 24. This year’s winners are Leona Council, M.D.; Ambika Ashraf, M.D.; Comfort Enah, Ph.D.; R. N.; and Sonya Health, M.D.

‘Spiritual Distress among Patients and Families: Offering Care’ talk Sept. 29

Often caregivers encounter patients who along with their family are in spiritual distress. This can be difficult to navigate for the caregivers and those individuals in distress, particularly if they do not share the same spiritual beliefs or backgrounds.

UAB Hospital Staff Chaplain Melvin Rodgers, D.Min., will present “Spiritual Distress Among Patients and Families: Offering Care” Wednesday, Sept. 29 from noon to 1 p.m. in the UAB Hospital West Pavilion Conference Center Board Room. Rodgers will discuss the indicators of spiritual distress and effective tools for caring for these individuals while also caring for yourself as the caregiver.

The class is offered by the UAB Resource Center Employee Assistance Program at no cost for UAB and UAB Health System employees and their family. Participants may bring their lunch. Space is limited. Call 934-2281 to register.

The UAB Resource Center Employee Assistance and Counseling Program provides counseling, supervisor consultation and a variety of educational programs designed to support the quest for health in all areas of life. For more information about this program or other services the center provides, visit the www.uab.edu/ufe.

Gary Chapman’s works selected for New American Paintings edition

Art Professor Gary Chapman is featured in the latest edition of New American Paintings. Juried Exhibitions-in-Print: Chapman is given a four-page spread featuring three of his works on oil on canvas, inserted into wooden panels with mixed media and found objects. This is the fourth time Chapman has been selected for inclusion in the book.

HIPAA reminder: faxing protecting health information

Questions about faxing protected health information (PHI) are asked frequently. Information is available as a reminder about the UAB/UABHS’s guidelines for faxing PHI. Fax machines may be used to transmit PHI, provided that you comply with the UAB/UABHS’s guide- lines for faxing that were established to minimize the risk of misdirected faxes.

A download of the guidelines is available at www.hipaia. uab.edu/policies/Faxing_HIPAA_3-10.pdf.

Women & Infants to offer classes

UAB Women & Infants Services is reaching out to the community to offer a series of classes geared to educating women about their mid-life health care needs.

A series of three seminars is planned: Sept. 23, Holly Richter, M.D., will discuss incontinence and other pelvic floor disorders, and their treatments; Sept. 30, Wright Rates, M.D., will discuss menopause; and Oct. 7, Janet McLaren, M.D., will discuss hormone replacement therapy.

Each class will be held in the new UAB Women and Infants Center and free parking is available. Cost for an individual class is $5, or $12 for all three, and dinner is included. Check-in begins at 5:45 p.m. with each physician’s presentation beginning at 6 p.m. and lasting approximately an hour and a half with time for questions and discussion.

Space is limited and reservations are required. For more information or to register call 975-2337 or email fenci@uabmc.edu.

Haddin Humanities Forum to explore ‘moral fact’

How should one confront evil? Professor James Slack, Ph.D., will examine this question during the UAB Theodore Haddin Humanities Forum lecture at 11:45 a.m. Friday, Sept. 24 in the UAB Mervyn H. Sterne Library, Henley Room. The event is free and open to the public. Call 934-2290 for more details.

Slack’s lecture, “The Bouboulof Dilemma: Confronting Evil with Moral Fact,” will examine the moral “fact” by which 20th century German theologian Dietrich Bouboulof tried to live his life in the shadow of Nazi Germany. “The moral fact was unconditional love toward one’s neighbor,” says Slack. “But what do you do when that neighbor is an agent of evil?”

Try meditation, Tai Chi and yoga for stress management

Feeling stressed and tense? Learn new skills for relaxing and managing stress with The Resource Center’s popular Meditation, Tai Chi and Yoga classes.

Mediation classes will begin on Tuesday, Oct. 5 and continue each Tuesday through Dec. 7 from 12:10 to 12:50 p.m. (Note: Class will not meet Oct. 12 or Oct. 26). Meditation and a brief discussion are led by Resource Center counselor John Quinnell. This simple, ancient practice has been shown to alleviate the mental, emotional, and even physical effects of stress.

Tai Chi classes will begin on Thursday, Oct. 7 and continue each Thursday through Nov. 18 from 12:10 to 12:50 p.m. Classes will be taught by Resource Center Counselor Alesia Adams, a certified Tai Chi instructor. Tai Chi is a series of slow movements that have been shown to gently improve mental and physical strength and flexibility and at the same time aid relaxation.

Yoga classes will begin Thursday, Oct. 7 and continue each Thursday through Nov. 18 from 4:45 to 6 p.m. In this class, participants will combine mind, body and spirit to develop strength, balance and flexibility.

All classes meet in the Resource Center Classroom, Suite 330, 2121 11th Ave South. Participants are not required to attend all sessions of a class and may join at anytime during the month. Space is limited, so please call 934-2281 to register.
Jerry Stephens, Ph.D., director of Sterne Library, had high hopes that the one-year renovation project of the library would do two things: enable the library to provide an enhanced learning environment to the students and bring the facility up to date with the latest in technology.

With the heavy lifting on the project almost wrapped up, Stephens says the seeds behind the renovation already are showing their fruits.

“What we see — and what I’m most pleased with — is that there are more students studying collaboratively, and we’re giving them the space and technology in which to do that to the best of their abilities,” Stephens says. “Sterne Library has become a point of destination, not just to pick up a book, but to interact with other students — in terms of studying, class preparation and socially.”

The yearlong, three-phase renovation project to enhance and support learning activities for students is scheduled to be complete by mid-October. In terms of construction, all that remains is for the storefront material and glass to arrive and be installed. From a materials standpoint, there are approximately 25 computers and a little more furniture to put in place.

The first phase of the remodeling project included the addition of two seminar rooms to the South wing of the first floor, individual computer workstations, a new reference print collection area and an area for reference librarians. Phase II included a renovation of the circulation desk and the West entrance and lobby area, plus the addition of several group study rooms.

The third phase added new computer workstations for patrons, collaborative study space and the reference and inter-library loan service desk.

New carpet also has been installed and a fresh coat of paint applied throughout the renovated space. Amenities include more power outlets, new furniture, collaborative work centers and a computer-equipped seminar room for library instruction.

Still the quiet space students cherish

Stephens says the library — though quite different than before — maintains its stature as an educational hub.

“It is still a cultural and intellectual center in terms of information and information technology,” says Stephens. “Does it have a different face and feel? Yes, it does. But traditional quiet study spaces still exist on all three floors.”

Stephens says the library has had a long-standing history of not making the first floor a quiet study space because of the need to provide different service points at which to interact with and help students.

Those service points, including the help and reference desks, have been updated to better enable staff to provide assistance.

Those spaces that are available for study on the first floor do provide some isolation in terms of sound and space to enable small groups of students to come together and work on projects.

“We have state-of-the-art technology in those rooms, including a large flat-screen monitor on the wall that a student can feed a laptop into,” Stephens says. “That enables everyone in the study group to easily see what’s being worked on and make comments and work together to finalize a presentation, for example.”

Stephens says the latest in technology is present throughout the library and already in use by faculty and students, including two seminar rooms with smart boards.

“We’ve hosted ad hoc classes, group study sessions, doctoral dissertation defenses, faculty training sessions, student group meetings and other sessions,” he says. “We’re excited about all of the changes.”

Stephens adds, “And I can’t say enough about the work of our staff during the construction. They have been tremendous. And we are all grateful for the support of President (Carol) Garrison and Provost (Eli) Capilouto have provided for the project.”

For more information on utilizing the library’s seminar rooms, visit www.mhsl.uab.edu. For a video tour of the renovated library, visit www.youtube.com/uhbnews.

Sterne Library took their renovations to the website

Sterne Library recently rolled out its new website, which enables users to search OCLC — the largest international bibliographic utility in the world — from the library’s homepage. OCLC is a not-for-profit computer service and research organization of some 72,000 libraries in 171 countries whose systems help libraries locate, acquire, catalog and lend library materials.

“If faculty, staff or a student is looking for a specific book, they will be able to find it easily,” says Stephens. “If it’s here at UAB, at Samford, Birmingham-Southern, Auburn, Alabama or if it’s at the University of Queensland or the University of Hong Kong, you can find it on our site.”

The redesigned Sterne Library is quite different than before, but it maintains its stature as an educational hub. “It is still a cultural and intellectual center in terms of information and information technology,” says Director Jerry Stephens.

Sterne renovations gives students the latest in technology

J oseph Stephens, Ph.D., director of Sterne Library, has high hopes that the one-year renovation project of the library would do two things: enable the library to provide an enhanced learning environment to the students and bring the facility up to date with the latest in technology.

With the heavy lifting on the project almost wrapped up, Stephens says the seeds behind the renovation already are showing their fruits.

“What we see — and what I’m most pleased with — is that there are more students studying collaboratively, and we’re giving them the space and technology in which to do that to the best of their abilities,” Stephens says. “Sterne Library has become a point of destination, not just to pick up a book, but to interact with other students — in terms of studying, class preparation and socially.”

The yearlong, three-phase renovation project to enhance and support learning activities for students is scheduled to be complete by mid-October. In terms of construction, all that remains is for the storefront material and glass to arrive and be installed. From a materials standpoint, there are approximately 25 computers and a little more furniture to put in place.

The first phase of the remodeling project included the addition of two seminar rooms to the South wing of the first floor, individual computer workstations, a new reference print collection area and an area for reference librarians. Phase II included a renovation of the circulation desk and the West entrance and lobby area, plus the addition of several group study rooms.

The third phase added new computer workstations for patrons, collaborative study space and the reference and inter-library loan service desk.

New carpet also has been installed and a fresh coat of paint applied throughout the renovated space. Amenities include more power outlets, new furniture, collaborative work centers and a computer-equipped seminar room for library instruction.

Still the quiet space students cherish

Stephens says the library — though quite different than before — maintains its stature as an educational hub.

“It is still a cultural and intellectual center in terms of information and information technology,” says Stephens. “Does it have a different face and feel? Yes, it does. But traditional quiet study spaces still exist on all three floors.”

Stephens says the library has had a long-standing history of not making the first floor a quiet study space because of the need to provide different service points at which to interact with and help students.

Those service points, including the help and reference desks, have been updated to better enable staff to provide assistance.

Those spaces that are available for study on the first floor do provide some isolation in terms of sound and space to enable small groups of students to come together and work on projects.

“We have state-of-the-art technology in those rooms, including a large flat-screen monitor on the wall that a student can feed a laptop into,” Stephens says. “That enables everyone in the study group to easily see what’s being worked on and make comments and work together to finalize a presentation, for example.”

Stephens says the latest in technology is present throughout the library and already in use by faculty and students, including two seminar rooms with smart boards.

“We’ve hosted ad hoc classes, group study sessions, doctoral dissertation defenses, faculty training sessions, student group meetings and other sessions,” he says. “We’re excited about all of the changes.”

Stephens adds, “And I can’t say enough about the work of our staff during the construction. They have been tremendous. And we are all grateful for the support of President (Carol) Garrison and Provost (Eli) Capilouto have provided for the project.”

For more information on utilizing the library’s seminar rooms, visit www.mhsl.uab.edu. For a video tour of the renovated library, visit www.youtube.com/uhbnews.

Sterne Library took their renovations to the website

Sterne Library recently rolled out its new website, which enables users to search OCLC — the largest international bibliographic utility in the world — from the library’s homepage. OCLC is a not-for-profit computer service and research organization of some 72,000 libraries in 171 countries whose systems help libraries locate, acquire, catalog and lend library materials.

“If faculty, staff or a student is looking for a specific book, they will be able to find it easily,” says Stephens. “If it’s here at UAB, at Samford, Birmingham-Southern, Auburn, Alabama or if it’s at the University of Queensland or the University of Hong Kong, you can find it on our site.”

The redesigned Sterne Library is quite different than before, but it maintains its stature as an educational hub. “It is still a cultural and intellectual center in terms of information and information technology,” says Director Jerry Stephens.

Sterne renovations gives students the latest in technology
Peanut perils: Why are they now such a dangerous allergy?

It’s a sign of the times: Across America, the entrances to many elementary-school classrooms are now guarded by the image of a large peanut trapped behind the red circle and slash that is the international symbol for “NO.”

Potentially deadly allergic reactions to peanuts have become a serious issue at schools, birthday parties and anywhere else children and food mix in uncertain ways. And according to a heavily publicized study in the May 12 issue of the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, the problem is getting worse. Based on a 5,300-household survey, the study reported that the number of peanut allergies more than tripled over 10 years, from 0.4 percent of children surveyed in 1997 to 1.4 percent of children surveyed in 2008.

Extrapolating those findings nationwide is problematic, says UAB pediatric allergist and immunologist Prescott Atkinson, M.D. But the number of confirmed cases of peanut allergy in the United States is trending upward, he agrees.

**Spoiling for a fight**

Peanut allergy occurs when the immune system mistakenly identifies peanut proteins as harmful and responds by releasing histamine and other symptoms causing chemicals.

The antibody behind the allergic reaction is called Immunoglobulin E, or IgE. People who are allergic to peanuts tend to have a higher than normal level of IgE in their bloodstreams. IgE antibodies are specific to individual allergens. IgE associated with peanut allergy, for example, is called peanut-specific IgE.

It’s likely, says Atkinson, that the IgE system developed primarily to battle parasitic infections. And because the Western world has largely eradicated parasites, the system could be underutilized.

“It’s looking for something to do,” Atkinson says. “And like a small child with too much time on its hands, the idle IgE system sometimes gets into trouble, producing antibodies against harmless substances.”

Changes in the environment, including dietary habits, could play a role in the increased numbers of peanut allergies, too. “If you eat anything that comes in a plastic wrapper, it will have a large array of ingredients,” he says — and that increases the chances of provoking an allergic reaction. “Years ago, our diets weren’t as varied.”

**Without a trace**

There is no debate, though, about the seriousness of peanut allergy. Symptoms, which usually occur within minutes of exposure, include hives, swelling of the tongue, itching of the mouth and throat, tightening of the chest, nasal congestion, vomiting, diarrhea and wheezing. For highly allergic children and adults, even a tiny amount of the food can create a life-threatening medical emergency called anaphylaxis, with symptoms that include a sudden drop in blood pressure, rapid pulse, restricted airways and loss of consciousness.

And because the Western world has largely eradicated parasites, the system could be underutilized.

“We’re getting a severe response,” Atkinson says. But it doesn’t take even much peanut presence to provoke a reaction. Cross-contamination, the use of a low grade of peanut oil cooking spray (highly refined peanut oils are safe) — even the re-use of a pan that formerly contained peanuts — can all pose a threat, as well.

It’s often a permanent problem, too, because only 10 to 20 percent of peanut allergies tend to disappear with age. Atkinson says. Whether an allergy resolves could depend on the level of IgE in the bloodstream. “Some data suggests that if the level of peanut-specific IgE is low at the time of diagnosis, that’s a good sign,” Atkinson says. “If early on you have high levels of IgE, it’s almost always a lifelong problem.”

**On the horizon**

The allergy’s role in handling any problem is to test, monitor and educate the patient, and finally, if necessary, to challenge the patient orally with the food to prove whether the allergy is still present.

Atkinson says. Peanut allergies are rarely challenged unless the specific IgE has dropped to low levels, though, because reactions can be so severe. However, he notes, there are “bright spots on the horizon.” Desensitization treatments are being developed that aim to train the body to grow accustomed to peanuts through regular exposure to the food. Before they are ready for widespread use, though, “we need a technique that’s reliable and safe,” he says. “We’re talking about initial exposure that’s way less than a single peanut.”

Another source of hope involves research to see if high-tech drugs like omalizumab, a monoclonal antibody approved for allergic asthma, could help peanut allergy sufferers, too. Atkinson is optimistic: “I don’t have much doubt that in the next five or 10 years there will be an effective treatment for food allergies,” he says.

---

Grammar Winner Pat Metheny to perform at ASC Oct. 1

UAB’s Alys Stephens Center will present jazz guitarist and composer Pat Metheny at 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 1, in the center. Tickets are $55, $48, $38; $20 student tickets. Call 975-2787 or go to www.Alys Stephens.org.

Come early at 7 p.m. for a pre-concert jazz discussion with Steve Roberts, D.M.A., assistant professor of jazz studies in the UAB Department of Music. Metheny also will participate in a Q&A—A Thursday, Sept. 30, which will be open to music students, music educators and area musicians. Space is limited. For more information, contact Heath Mixon, ASC Education Department, at 934-6012 or heathmix@uab.edu.

An Alys Stephens Center favorite, Metheny has won an extraordinary 17 Grammy Awards and been nominated 33 times in 12 categories, more than any performer in Grammy history. Metheny will return to the Alys Stephens Center to begin his new tour and unveil a new genre of music, acoustically driven “solo ensemble” he has dubbed “orchestrions.” The performance will feature music from “Orchestrion,” his latest CD of all new original compositions, and some older tunes from the Metheny songbook.

According to Metheny’s tour bio, “Orchestrion” brings a musical idea from the late 19th and early 20th centuries — a large, mechanical, multi-instrument device that utilizes actual orchestral instruments of various types, called an orchestrion — to the technologies of today. His concept includes a large ensemble of acoustic instruments, including several pianos, a drum kit, marimbas, “guitar-bots,” percussion instruments and even inlets of old-fashioned bottles.

Through Metheny’s guitar and compositional mind, five new original pieces showcase the instruments as they are struck, plucked and otherwise played via the technology of solenoid switches and pneumatics. Metheny worked for months with a brilliant team of scientists and engineers to develop and assemble the “New Orchestrion” for this project, according to the bio. More info is available on his website, www.PatMetheny.com.

“As the instruments started to trickle in from the various inventors,” Metheny says, “the experience of writing for them and figuring out what might be possible with them provided a self-imposed challenge that proved to be difficult and time-consuming, but absolutely exhilarating.”

“I am excited to share this project. If nothing else, this has turned out to be something unique. And in the process of developing all this music and these instruments and discovering what they can do and what they are good at, I learned so much.”
The importance of First Amendment

While some books targeted have been banned or restricted, in a majority of cases the books were not banned. The efforts of librarians, teachers, booksellers and members of the community to retain the books in the library collections are lauded by the association as reasons why many books have been saved.

Events like Sterne Library’s teach the importance of First Amendment rights and the power of literature. They also draw attention to the danger that exists when restraints are imposed on the availability of information in a free society.

“The idea that you can come in and say, ‘I don’t like this book; take it off your shelf,’ really seems contrary to everything we do — with free speech and the ability to hold an idea — whether it’s popular or unpopular, liked or disliked,” Hettrich says. “It’s a principle we hold. We’re doing that to draw attention to this idea.”

More than 40 faculty, staff and students participated in BBW in 2009. Participants came to Sterne Library and read excerpts from the list of challenged books.

“We’re excited about being able to offer video and audio recordings this year,” Hettrich says. “It gives everyone a chance; they can do what they feel most comfortable with, and we can edit it and display it on the Web. It can be something ongoing, something that happens before banned book week and can still be displayed after.”

Anyone in the UAB community who wants to participate can contact Hettrich at dhettich@uab.edu or at 934-3634 and schedule an appointment before Saturday, Oct. 2.

E-CIGARETTES

CONTINUED from page 1

a cigarette with an alcoholic drink, especially in social settings. Faux-cigarette users are more likely setting themselves up to slip back into using the more readily available tobacco versions, Bailey says.

With the gums and patches, “you have broken that hand-to-mouth oral gratification habit,” he says. “With the e-cigarettes, you’re actually encouraging it. I just don’t think people are going to be quitting as easily.”

Proven alternatives—including nicotine gum, patches, lozenges, sprays and inhalers — are better for several reasons, Bailey says.

“The whole point of all these other cessation devices is that they’re not attractive. They’re not made to be a lot of fun.”

For instance, nicotine gum is hard to chew on purpose. “But they do give you some support, and that helps reduce some of the craving and withdrawal symptoms.”

Sweet temptation

Opponents of e-cigarettes are concerned that they come in flavors such as vanilla and chocolate, which makes them more attractive to minors. But because these flavors cover the harsh taste of pure nicotine, they also are popular with users such as Cherie, who find that flavonoids help them focus on the “positive” effects of the drug.

Nicotine “does almost whatever you want it to do,” says Bailey. “It will wake you up if you’re sleepy, and it will calm you down if you’re nervous. It’s a very powerful drug: that’s why people get addicted to it.”

But exactly how nicotine gains control of the smoker’s mind is still poorly understood, says UAB neurobiologist Robin Lester, Ph.D., who has studied nicotine addiction for decades. “That’s the $64 million question,” he says. “Nicotine doesn’t produce euphoria like heroin or cocaine. In fact, when they first try it, it makes many people sick. But it’s one of the hardest drugs to quit.”

Coffee and cigarettes

The primary effects of nicotine, including its mood-altering powers and a tendency to sharpen mental focus and curb appetite, are most attractive at first, Lester explains. But eventually what are called the “secondary associative cues” related to smoking — the smell of tobacco, for example, or the pairing of morning coffee and cigarette — become “very, very powerful,” Lester says. In fact, it appears that these cues may be driving the desire for cigarettes in regular smokers maybe more than the physical craving for nicotine itself.

Nicotine replacement strategies such as gum, along with behavioral therapies — for example, slowly increasing the time between drinking morning coffee and having a cigarette to break the association — certainly help many smokers, says Lester. But studies show that up to 80 percent of smokers fail in their attempts to quit, he notes. Lester believes that e-cigarettes, if used as intended, could be an additional tool to help those who have found no success using other nicotine replacement therapies.

In the long run, however, any solution that involves nicotine is likely to be problematic, he says. Studies at UAB and elsewhere suggest that even just a handful of brushes with the drug can permanently reshape neural wiring, leaving a lifelong craving for more.

“There are some people in the field who argue that once you’ve smoked, basically you’re a smoker or an ex-smoker for life because you’ve changed your brain,” Lester says. His research group is focused on understanding the chemical pathways involved in nicotine addiction — work that may eventually lead to new medications that restore balance in the brain and help more smokers quit.

Push for regulation

Both Lester and Bailey hope that the Food and Drug Administration, which has disputed claims from e-cigarette makers that the devices are completely nontoxic, wins legal battles against which they should be regulated. But whatever the final verdict, Bailey says the main goal remains getting smokers to quit.

“There are a lot of ways to do it,” Bailey says. “People are able to quit on their own, even if they failed miserably in the past. The average successful quitter has failed five or six times in the past. So don’t give up.”

September 20, 2010 UAB Reporter 5

UAB community invited to ‘Celebrate the Freedom to Read’

I ntellectual freedom — the freedom to access information and express ideas, even if the information and ideas might be considered unorthodox or unpopular — provides the foundation for Banned Books Week: Celebrating the Freedom to Read, set this year for Sept. 25 to Oct. 2.

Founded by the American Library Association, Banned Books Week (BBW) celebrates the freedom to read and the importance of the First Amendment. BBW stresses the importance of ensuring the availability of unorthodox or unpopular viewpoints for all who wish to read and access them.

UAB’s Sterne Library is participating in BBW for the second consecutive year, and faculty, staff and students are invited to visit the library and read a challenged book during that time.

“We like being a part of this event for several reasons,” says Dana Hettrich, general reference librarian at Sterne. “The ability to read, and to choose what you read, and to go to a library and expect to find a certain book — or any book — is part of the American fabric. To have an opportunity to promote the importance of protecting books and giving our faculty, staff and students an opportunity to be a part of something larger is nice.”

The books featured during Banned Books Week have been targets of attempted bannings, and many of the books are considered classics. Some of the American Library Association’s most challenged books include 1984, A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls, the Harry Potter series, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The Kitte Banner and Lord of the Flies.

The books will be available to be recorded on audio or video for a podcast that will be posted to the Sterne Library Facebook page and librarians’ blogs.

“We will be happy to provide the items if volunteers don’t have items of their own,” Hettrich says.

Anyone in the UAB community who wants to participate can contact Hettrich at dhettich@uab.edu or at 934-3634 and schedule an appointment to come by and read and record the selection of their choice between now and Saturday, Oct. 2.

Volunteers read for approximately five minutes and can choose where to start to read and where to stop.

“Will be happy to provide the items if volunteers don’t have items of their own,” Hettrich says.

Dana Hettrich, general reference librarian at Sterne, says those who read during Banned Books Week this year will have the option to be recorded on audio or video for a podcast that will be posted to the Sterne Library Facebook page and librarians’ blogs.

“We offer video and audio recordings this year,” Hettrich says. “It gives everyone a choice; they can do what they feel most comfortable with, and we can edit it and display it on the Web. It can be something ongoing, something that happens before banned book week and can still be displayed after.”

While some books targeted have been banned or restricted, in a majority of cases the books were not banned. The efforts of librarians, teachers, booksellers and members of the community to retain the books in the library collections are lauded by the association as reasons why many books have been saved.

The importance of First Amendment

While some books targeted have been banned or restricted, in a majority of cases the books were not banned. The efforts of librarians, teachers, booksellers and members of the community to retain the books in the library collections are lauded by the association as reasons why many books have been saved.

Events like Sterne Library’s teach the importance of First Amendment rights and the power of literature. They also draw attention to the danger that exists when restraints are imposed on the availability of information in a free society.

“The idea that you can come in and say, ‘I don’t like this book; take it off your shell,’ really seems contrary to everything we do — with free speech and the ability to hold an idea — whether it’s popular or unpopular, liked or disliked,” Hettrich says. “It’s a principle we hold. We’re doing that to draw attention to this idea.”

More than 40 faculty, staff and students participated in BBW in 2009. Participants came to Sterne Library and read excerpts from the list of challenged books.

“We’re excited about being able to offer video and audio recordings this year,” Hettrich says. “It gives everyone a choice; they can do what they feel most comfortable with, and we can edit it and display it on the Web. It can be something ongoing, something that happens before banned book week and can still be displayed after.”

Anyone in the UAB community who wants to participate can contact Hettrich at dhettich@uab.edu or at 934-3634 and schedule an appointment to come by and read and record the selection of their choice between now and Saturday, Oct. 2.

Volunteers read for approximately five minutes and can choose where to start to read and where to stop.

“We will be happy to provide the items if volunteers don’t have items of their own,” Hettrich says.
UAB engineering lifts off with more projects for NASA

I t’s rocket science is simple, it would seem that aerospace engineering must be just as complicated. Not to Rob Rouleau, a project manager at the UAB Center for Biophysical Sciences and Engineering (CBSE). He considers himself and other aerospace engineers as experts trained to answer a simple set of questions — that is, how will the equipment be used, how to design something that best fits that use and how can the manufacturing match the exact specifications?

The 18-member team in the CBSE has proven it answers all those and more, says Rouleau. The center earns continual funding and a seal of approval from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), including a recent extension of more than $70 million to be shared among UAB and three out-of-state engineering firms.

Years ago, NASA determined that it needed better, smaller and more efficient cooling and freezing equipment for use on space shuttles and the International Space Station. Astronauts and others rely on cold storage of biosamples from space to maintain scientific integrity, Rouleau says.

Originally, the CBSE crew developed MERLIN, short for “microgravity experiment research locker incubator,” to meet some of those cold-storage needs. Next came the NASA contract for UAB to design and build GLACIER, short for “general laboratory active cryogenic experiment refrigerator,” to fulfill a greater demand for storage and safe transport.

When it first debuted in 2008, the cryogenic GLACIER was instantly put to good use. The sturdy freezers have NASA-approved hardware and wiring, and are built to withstand rocket-launch conditions. MERLIN units also are considered an important part of the cold-storage equation in space flight.

“The way we end up using is nothing like what you might call off-the-shelf technology,” Rouleau says. “A commercially available dormitory fridge or deep freezer would never make the cut. UAB’s new units are now mainstays of storing biosamples and research experiments during trips to and from the space station. CBSE engineers monitor and keep the units running properly from a satellite-linked monitoring station housed at UAB. GLACIER is compact enough to mount in what’s called the shuttle mid-deck, where the crew spends a great deal of time when not in flight mode. The freezer can maintain a temperature of minus-256 degrees Fahrenheit and keep up to 22 pounds of material frozen solid. MERLIN units are about half the size of GLACIER and can cool to minus-4 degrees Fahrenheit. MERLINs also can be switched to warm their contents, like the incubators used in biological science projects. CBSE engineers say they are confident that when the final decision is made, the UAB freezers will meet NASA standard for payloads aboard new orbital vehicles that replace the shuttle fleet.

Rouleau says the types of scientific payloads making their way back to Earth frozen by GLACIER include racks of Petri-dishes filled with microorganisms and blood samples taken from astronauts during orbit or spaceflight. Early test results indicate that GLACIER will meet the qualifications.

So while he can’t claim to be a rocket scientist, Rouleau does get the satisfaction of knowing his designs are helping NASA do its job — and he can literally watch his work take off! That’s because CBSE sends Rouleau and a team to Cape Canaveral, Fla., for the launches and landings.

“To be there when they’re installing the freezers on the shuttle and to monitor them remotely is very rewarding,” Rouleau says. “To watch astronauts work on your hardware is really exciting.”

Alabama Launchpad accepting plans for competition

T he Alabama Launchpad competition is back for a fifth year, and UAB faculty and staff interested in participating in the start-up business competition have until Oct. 15 to register. The first business plans are due Nov. 1.

“We’re looking for high-growth ideas,” says Glenn Kinstler, director of Alabama Launchpad. “We’re looking for the types of companies and business ideas that could grow very rapidly in a short period of time and employ people.”

Entrepreneurs have experienced success through the first four years of the competition, with UAB sweeping the first two spots of the competition two years ago. Innovative Composite Solutions, a business started by Selvam Pillay, Udaya Vaidya, Ph.D., and J. Barry Andrews, Ph.D., in Engineering, won first place and a $100,000 prize in the 2008-09 competition. Another UAB group which included neurosurgeon Staneus Guthrie, M.D., finished fourth this past year — just outside the top three paid spots.

Through the business plan competition and other programs, Alabama Launchpad provides a framework for individuals in the state to develop their business ideas and connect to a network of experts, investors and service providers that can increase the odds of success. Alabama Launchpad provides unique opportunities to obtain start-up capital, receive expert guidance and establish working relationships within the business, academic and investment capital communities.

“Anybody who has an idea — no matter how wild and crazy it might seem — can write a business plan around it. At the very least they can get some good feedback and guidance from business leaders, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists around the state who know what they’re doing. And the very best ideas are going to get some funding, too,” Kinstler says. A 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, Alabama Launchpad is a partnership among the state’s research universities and the business community. The Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA), a non-profit corporation funded by more than 68 leading companies in the state, also is a founding partner.

The organization awards $175,000 annually as part of the competition. First place receives $100,000, second place receives $50,000 and third receives $25,000.

Kinstler says this year’s competition will be more interactive as the group embraces and encourages the use of social media websites, including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

For more information on this year’s competition, visit www.alabamalaunchpad.com.
Cybercrime fighters help extend long arm across Alabama

The FBI has described Gary Warner as “an online superhero” for his work in helping them bust bad guys. Now Warner and the computer forensics laboratory he leads on the UAB campus are ready to extend a unique brand of investigative know-how to law enforcement agencies throughout Alabama as part of Operation Swordphish.

“Based on our FBI experiences with the UAB, Gary and the student researchers can wrap the package up in a nice little bow by identifying the suspect, the website domains and other vital information. He passes it on to investigators who can then be very exact in their efforts to catch the criminals,” Miskell says.

A national model

UAB’s Operation Swordphish responsibilities also include an education component. Warner and the UAB departments of Justice Sciences and Computer and Information Sciences, which support Warner’s cybercrime laboratory, will begin a statewide awareness campaign in the fall of 2010.

“The idea is to make citizens aware of the threats and let them know that there are people ready to help them if they’ve become a victim of cybercrime,” Warner says.

The education component also will target law enforcement offices with the development of training tools to address the most common problems experienced in their cybercrime investigations.

“We’ll be measuring and tracking the most frequent questions that we get from law enforcement and will build training modules for just in time training for investigators throughout Alabama,” Warner says.

Miskell says he’ll be watching his cybercrime-fighting sidekick and Operation Swordphish closely as well as law enforcement offices all over the country.

“I think that once this project gets up and running and the citizens of Alabama begin benefitting, other states will see Operation Swordphish and mirror it,” Miskell says.

Media Relations uses social media to raise UAB’s profile

When UAB began delving into social media webspaces to spread its message, it had one goal in mind: To build a larger audience for UAB news around the country, says Andrea Reiber, manager of Electronic Media.

“Research-wise, we’re well known,” Reiber says. “But we’re doing so much with undergraduate and graduate education and the medical school. We wanted to do more to reach reporters who might want to cover something that’s off the beaten path.”

Perhaps no story illustrates that better than the one about the biomedical engineering students who developed a computer program that teaches CPR using hand-held remote controls from the Nintendo® Wii game console.

UAB’s Department of Media Relations uses standard procedures to promote the story, including a news release sent to media organizations. But it also used Twitter, and the story caught the eye of blogger Joaquin Chang from the website ArteTechnica.com.

Chang blogged about the biomedical engineering student’s exploits and the story was picked up on by Popular Science, Newsweek, Discovery Science, MetaGadget and NPR.org.

“The story caught the interest of a blogger, we hooked up on Twitter, and she wrote a story and blogged about it,” Reiber says. “Then Newsweek picked it up and CNN and NBC. That’s an example of how you don’t have to start at the top to hit the big guys. We started at the bottom, and it kind of bubbled up by working it through blogs and Twitter.”

UAB Public Relations & Marketing, which consists of the departments of Media Relations (including Electronic Media, Marketing/Web Communications, Creative, Periodicals, and Internal Communications and Relations), has made a concerted effort to use social media to promote all of UAB’s success stories.

Clinton Colmenares, director of Media Relations, says the media specialists are doing more through Twitter and other social media outlets to develop one-on-one relationships with bloggers, reporters and news outlets.

“How people consume news has changed dramatically in the past few years,” Colmenares says. “Social media are mainstream, and they’re both a destination for niche audiences and a conduit to global ones. Tweeting is more than telling people what you ate for breakfast. The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, CNN and other major news outlets all Tweet and blog. Our use of these tools just adds to our repertoire. Conversely, anyone who’s not using these methods gets left behind, so we really appreciate the support UAB faculty, staff and students have shown Media Relations for being out front.”

Our audience is everybody

The struggles of media outlets from print to broadcast have resulted in smaller staffs and, therefore, fewer reporters available to track down stories. In turn, Media Relations works more like a newsroom. Media specialists mine for stories on campus and use a variety of platforms to spread what they uncover, including YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, Vimeo and Tube Mogul.

Media Relations regularly posts video stories to its YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/uabnews, and it has built a large following on Twitter @UABNews with more than 2,700 followers. UAB’s retweet rank is in the 98th percentile. All media specialists can tweet from that account and are followed by reporters and journalists who are interested in specific items regarding science, education or medical news. All specialists also have Facebook accounts they use to promote UAB news.

“In ten years, maybe even five years ago, our audience was the traditional news media,” Reiber says. “Today — right now — our audience is everybody and we’re trying to get quality information featuring the UAB name in front of as many people as possible.”

September 20, 2010 UAB Reporter 7
artinis
an event benefiting
the Art and Complementary Therapy Program of the UAB Center for Palliative and Supportive Care

Thursday, September 30, 2010
6:00pm - 9:00pm

Innovation Depot
1500 First Avenue North
Birmingham, Alabama

Enjoy live music, interactive art stations, food & drinks
Tickets only $30/$35 at door

Order tickets online at www.uab.edu/artinis or call 205.975.0848.