The majority of men ages 65 and older today are healthy, happy and independent, but some experience changes that signal deterioration or decline. After age 30, the amount of the male hormone testosterone decreases each year. Are low testosterone levels commonly found in older men related to health problems or just a natural part of aging? If so, would increasing the testosterone levels in these men help them feel better?

A joint effort between UAB, 11 other academic research centers and the National Institute on Aging is examining these questions in The Testosterone Trial. The nationwide, $45 million study is the largest to compare the effects of the male hormone with a placebo. The trial is enrolling men ages 65 and older to see if testosterone-replacement improves muscle strength, sex drive, walking speed, energy level, memory and red blood cell count.

UAB researchers Cora E. Lewis, M.D., and James M. Shikany, Dr.P.H., are seeking 65 to 70 healthy men, ages 65 or older, to enroll in the trial. You can nominate someone for employee of the month at www.hrm.uab.edu/main/relations/eotm/.

Thomas Kinkade, painter of light? Check. Cheesy couple in a romantic pose, circa 1970s? Check. Portrait of a cute little bunny, or is it a rat? Check. It is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but some works of art are just bad. Some are so bad they’re good; others are just asking for it.

Art students in UAB Professor Gary Chapman’s painting class have given bad art new life. They scavenged the family home and grandma’s attic and scoured thrift stores and garage sales to find the perfect “bad” painting. Their mission: Turn that awful art into a winner by re-imagining the painting. Much of the art used in this project is mass-produced, although one student re-imagined a painting done by her grandmother.

The works of 35 students and Chapman will be exhibited one night only, from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday, Nov. 19, in Bare Hands Gallery, 109 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd. South. All of the works will be for sale. This is the second time Chapman has done the “Recycled Art” project with his students; the first time was a smashing success. The results are hilarious, beautiful, irreverent, clever, silly and even scary.
UAB Hospital named recipient of consumer choice award

For the 12th consecutive year, UAB Hospital has won the National Research Corporation Consumer Choice Award for the Birmingham area. It is the only hospital in Birmingham to be included among more than 300 of the nation’s top hospitals based on consumer perceptions of quality and image. The annual survey represents the opinions of more than 450,000 consumers in 250,000 households.

“We are extremely proud to receive this recognition. We strive every day to provide the highest quality of care possible to the patients who trust us with their health. This is another important recognition for our professionals in their efforts to provide excellent care,” said Michael R. Waldrum, M.D., chief executive officer of UAB Hospital. “This acknowledgement is especially meaningful in that it comes directly from the people using our services, and all our physicians and staff should be proud.”

EAP program focuses on surviving holidays

Here they come again — the holidays. They are a time of joy, anticipation, good will and celebration for most. But if you are grieving the death of a loved one or other devastating losses, the holidays can be a very difficult and challenging time. How do you cope?

Steve Sweatt and Carol MacMillan of Community Grief Support Service (CGSS) will discuss practical ways to survive the holidays in a noon seminar Wednesday, Nov. 17 in the UAB Hospital West Pavilion Board Room. Sweatt and MacMillan will share coping tips and help create a personal holiday plan that will help you survive the holidays.

CGSS is a nonprofit agency providing free grief-support services to the community since 1999. CGSS is supported by grants and gifts from foundations and corporations — including the UAB Faculty & Staff Benevolent Fund — faith-based organizations and caring individuals.

The class is offered by the UAB Resource Center Employee Assistance Program and is open to all UAB and UAB Health System Employees Space is limited; call 934-2281 to register.

The UAB Resource Center Employee Assistance Program provides counseling, supervisor consultation and a variety of educational programs designed to support your quest for health in all areas of life. For more information about these programs or other Resource Center services, be sure to visit The Resource Center online at www.uab.edu/rc.

UAB logo adorns Five Points South

The UAB Blazer shield has been painted on the center of the Five Points South intersection to welcome commuters to campus.

Local businessman George Barber, who donated the funds for this, said he did it to celebrate how important UAB is to the city of Birmingham. “Our goal was to have it ready for Homecoming, and I’m glad we made it,” Barber said.

Mayor William Bell and the City of Birmingham hosted a pep rally there Nov. 4 to celebrate UAB’s Homecoming 2010.

“We are excited that Mr. Barber chose to support UAB with this generous gift. Thanks to him and Mayor Bell for spreading UAB’s team spirit throughout the community,” said President Carol Garrison.

African Children’s Choir coming to ASC

The Alys Stephens Center will present the African Children’s Choir and its performance, “Journey of Hope,” along with two lectures about Africa as part of the center’s World on Stage Festival Nov. 8-10, 2010.

The performance will take place at 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 14 as the Alys Stephens Center. Tickets are $57, $47, $37; $15 for children and $20 for students. Call 975-2787 or go to www.AlysStephens.org.

Two free lectures also will be presented in conjunction with the performance: The first, “The Plague That Thundered,” begins at 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 9, in the center. Michael Saag, M.D., director of UAB’s Center for AIDS Research (CFAR), will also talk about the center’s ongoing work and its extensive efforts at the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia. The cutting-edge research and treatment provided by CFAR affects patients in Alabama, Zambia and throughout the world.

Come to the center before the performance for “Landscapes of Ghana,” at 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 14. Kosi Avotri, M.D., will share historical background of challenging times facing the home countries of the children and families of the African Children’s Choir.

Crash test dummies? (From left to right) Grant Martin, Matt Windsor, Karri Bentley and Monica O’Brien of Public Relations & Marketing were among the 16 teams to compete in this year’s Gurney Derby during Homecoming week festivities. The team — known as Staph Inflection — performed its best, but was among the 14 teams to lose to an all-star squad from the School of Dentistry. For video from the event, visit www.youtube.com/uabnews.
The Hospital Maintenance Department has worked tirelessly for almost three decades to ensure children in UAB Hospital — a renowned hospital — receive the best care possible. The department is dedicated to ensuring that the facilities are up to the highest standards. They work closely with the hospital maintenance team to ensure that the needs of the hospital are met on a daily basis.

One of the most important tasks of the Hospital Maintenance Department is to keep the hospital running smoothly. They work with a team of experts who are trained to handle any situation that may arise. The team is made up of several different specialties, including maintenance, engineering, and operations. Each member of the team is responsible for different areas of the hospital, and they work together to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

The Hospital Maintenance Department is also responsible for keeping the hospital clean. They work closely with the housekeeping staff to ensure that the hospital is always clean and well-maintained. They also work with the food service staff to ensure that the hospital's dining areas are clean and well-stocked.

In addition to their daily tasks, the Hospital Maintenance Department is also responsible for handling any emergencies that may arise. They work closely with the hospital's emergency response team to ensure that any emergency situations are handled quickly and efficiently.

The Hospital Maintenance Department is an essential part of the hospital's operation. They work hard to ensure that the hospital is always running smoothly, and they are dedicated to providing the best possible care to the patients who come to UAB Hospital.

Hospital Maintenance seeks support from Santa’s elves

To donate to the Christmas Toy Fund, send a check payable to the UAB Maintenance Pediatric Toy Fund, 619 19th St. South, Room S036, Birmingham, AL 35294. For more information, contact Doug Williams at 934-6181 or Tabatha Issac at 934-5430.

The Christmas Toy Fund celebration, which is open to all UAB employees, will be held at 11 a.m. Dec. 16 in the North Pavilion second floor atrium. The Hospital Maintenance will be performing, Santa will make an appearance and refreshments will be served.

“This is an event that we absolutely love to do,” says Williams, an electrician who is directing the efforts for the ninth year. “We really want to treat the children and their families. It’s truly a highlight of the year for us.”

Employee of the Year

UAB President Carol Garrison will host an invitation-only presentation ceremony and reception honoring Vinodh with the highest non-academic employee award Friday, Nov. 12.

“I’ve been surprised two years in a row,” Srinivasasainagendra says. “When I was told the news, I didn’t know how to react. It’s certainly a big honor.”

Srinivasasainagendra came to UAB in 2000 and distinguished himself as a student, earning master’s degrees in electrical engineering in 2003 and in computer and information sciences in 2004. He has developed a formidable array of technical skills ranging from an expert in distributed and parallel computer technology to facility with a broad and still-expanding collection of programming and statistical languages, database design and management tools and software packages.

Srinivasasainagendra also choreographs computing development and data-analysis by acting as a channel between scientific investigators and the computing working group — one of the more challenging part of his job.

“Being able to dismantle high-level scientific specification into functional units and being able to delegate and coordinate with other members of the working group has added weekly challenges to my efforts handled in the section,” Srinivasasainagendra says. “SSG is like an ecosystem where people with expertise in different fields teach each other their known discipline of science. SSG’s computing team conducts and coordinates training and outreach sessions on high-performance computing and next-generation technologies to other members of the section and the scientific working group comprising of investigators and post-doctoral fellows teach us science in return. With access to top-notch high performance computing (HPC) resources, I get to offer computing solutions for bioinformatics and related life science problems.”

Srinivasasainagendra says his work is challenging and exciting. What he likes the most, he says, is the opportunity to collaborate with talented researchers and personnel who represent different science disciplines.

“The folks I work with, these are people who make headlines for the kind of research they do,” Srinivasasainagendra says. “They are very well known in the global arena. I’m really honored to be part of this development group,” which is a part of the Section of Statistical Genetics, but throughout UAB.

UAB is celebrated worldwide for its cutting-edge research in the biomedical sciences, and Jelai Wang, system programmer lead, says it is sometimes surprising to people unfamiliar with current biological research to find computer programmers and statisticians like Srinivasasainagendra working in life-science labs.

“In genetics and genomics in particular, the focal point of a great deal of research is on the generic code that underlies disorders including cancer, diabetes and obesity,” Wang says. “Understanding code is exactly what well-programmed, high-performance software and computers can do. If the observed data from biological and genetic studies are going to reveal meaningful results, those data have to be analyzed using sometimes novel and often highly creative computational techniques.

“It is precisely in this interface between the life sciences and computer technology that Srinivasasainagendra’s contributions to UAB are so valuable,” Wang says.

Grant proposals

Srinivasasainagendra also has made contributions to his department in the area of grant proposals.

Specifically, he often is counted on to perform complex, multi-step data-mining queries across multiple, online databases, including PubMed, CRISP, ISI and others,” says Hemant K. Tiwari, Ph.D., associate professor of biostatistics. “Sometimes he does this on very short notice and still produces high-quality tables and beautiful graphical works of art.”

These creative works have, without a doubt, contributed to the SSG’s and thus UAB’s continued success in finding and securing research funding for many important scientific projects.”

Srinivasasainagendra says he appreciates that he works in an environment that can provide an abundance of resources that enable him to do his job effectively and efficiently.

“Having represented different domains of science, from emporizing to computer science to bio-computing, it is very important for me to be part of a scientifically diverse and inter-disciplinary work environment,” Srinivasasainagendra says. “SSG is an open university by itself — a melting pot and a knowledge reservoir for different domains of science. Interacting with a broad zone of domain experts who are working together to solve some health related problem is fantastic. I am grateful to our section head David B. Allison, and computing team supervisor Jelai Wang, for inviting me to join the section more than six years ago. The feel-like home environment at SSG is so rewarding, and the day-to-day challenge get converted into successful research stories at the end.”

David Allison, Ph.D., professor of biostatistics says Srinivasasainagendra’s efforts are crucial to the SSG enterprise.

“Without a person like Vinodh, who has both a wide range of computational skills and an ability to work well in teams of investigative scientists, much of the research upon which UAB’s reputation is founded simple gets never reach fruition,” adds Allison. “We are all fortunate that Vinodh is keeping his UAB training and expertise here in Birmingham. He is one of the behind-the-scenes employees who make UAB’s progress and reputation possible.”

Srinivasasainagendra says campus researchers continue to push boundaries in their work — and he knows this because it has forced him to develop new ways to help them with their investigations.

Srinivasasainagendra’s tool kit has evolved to the point where he has to think more next generation in terms of computing techniques and sequencing.

“Next generation sequencing is something I’m really excited about,” he says. “I have a pipeline of projects that involves data collected through these next generation sequencing techniques, and biomedical informatics seems to be a very important and a critical player in this next generation projects.”

Srinivasasainagendra says he appreciates his co-workers who nominated him for the Employee of the Month award and the honor of being 2010’s UAB Employee of the Year.

“I love what I get to do here,” he says. “We do research in so many areas and a lot of problem solving. I feel we’re doing work that is a good service to humanity, and that’s what I like the most about the section.”

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Clinical trial to examine link between diabetes, gum disease

The School of Dentistry is one of four sites recruiting patients for a clinical trial to test whether the treatment of chronic periodontitis, or gum disease, improves control of Type 2 diabetes. This study is the largest clinical trial of diabetes and periodontitis to date, and the hope is that its results will lead to improvements in diabetes patient care.

“Research clearly shows an association between chronic periodontitis and Type 2 diabetes, and there is early evidence that treating periodontal infection and inflammation can improve glycemic control,” says Michael Reddy, D M.D., co-principal investigator. “Previous studies in this area have been encouraging, but too small to be conclusive.

“This is the first large, multi-center study to determine if periodontal treatment can improve glycemic control,” Reddy said.

Reddy and co-principal investigator Cora E. Lewis, M.D., in Preventive Medicine, will test whether non-surgical periodontal therapy has a positive impact on glycemic control for Type 2 diabetes. Six hundred adults with Type 2 diabetes and chronic periodontitis are being randomized at four sites: UAB; the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; the University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio; and Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York.

Researchers suspect the association between chronic periodontitis and diabetes is related to inflammatory molecules caused by periodontal infection that reach the circulation and disrupt the insulin pathway. Still, the exact connection between periodontitis and diabetes or blood-sugar control has not been defined.

“Inflammation anywhere in the body can lead to glucose-management problems, and keeping glucose levels as close to normal as possible is the key to managing diabetes,” Reddy says. “In this study, we are working with patients to teach them how to clean their teeth and see if we can eliminate that inflammation. If treating chronic periodontitis can help reduce blood glucose, the implications could be very significant to patient care.”

Study participants will be randomly assigned to receive either initial non-surgical periodontal therapy with chlorhexidine rinse (treatment subjects) or delayed non-surgical periodontal therapy (control subjects). Control subjects will be offered delayed periodontal therapy (scaling and root planing) following the six-month visit. Participants in both study arms will receive oral-hygiene instruction and lifestyle information at baseline and at the three- and six-month visits.

Recruiting for the five-year study began in November 2009 and will continue for the next 18 months. Those enrolled in the study will be monitored for six months. Those eligible to participate in the study:

- Must be at least 35 years old
- Have had physician-diagnosed Type 2 diabetes for more than three months
- Be under the care of a physician for diabetes management

- Have moderate-to-severe chronic periodontitis
- Have had no definitive periodontal treatment during the six months prior to enrollment
- Have at least 16 natural teeth

Qualified participants will receive teeth cleaning, periodontal treatment and dental examinations at no cost. Compensation is available, and parking will be validated for clinic visits. For more information on enrolling in the trial, call 975-7117 or 934-1903. You can also e-mail Janet Turman, study recruitment coordinator, at jturman@uab.edu.

More than 800 will take part nationwide.

“We’re looking for a few good men and then some,” says Lewis, professor in the Division of Preventive Medicine. “Most clinical trials on testosterone haven’t been large enough to show how testosterone therapy can help — or harm — men 65 and older. The database is so incomplete that the Institute of Medicine said we don’t have enough or long enough to show how testosterone therapy can help control the disease. UAB is one of four sites nationwide recruiting for the trial, which lasts approximately six months for those enrolled. For more information, call 975-7117 or 934-1903.

Testosterone trial

Continued from page 1

The concept seems simple: If your testosterone is low, fill it up. But Lewis says adding testosterone isn’t the equivalent of needing a quart of oil for the family car. She learned that as a principal investigator for the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI), which tested hormone-replacement therapy in post-menopausal women to see if it would help their memory and cognitive function and prevent bone fractures and heart attacks.

“It looked like estrogen would have good effects, but the Women’s Health Initiative demonstrated that giving female hormones to post-menopausal women wasn’t a long-term treatment to prevent common diseases seen in aging women,” Lewis says. “Just because it makes sense biologically doesn’t mean if you give it back to people when they’re older that it’s going to help them.” Lewis says. “The same may be true for testosterone. We’ll just have to see. This study is a first step in that process, and we really need to do it.”

From left to right) Cora E. Lewis, Michael Reddy, Javetta Jackson and Janet Turman are enrolling, teaching and studying patients as part of a clinical trial to test whether the treatment of gum disease can help Type 2 diabetics control the disease. UAB is one of four sites nationwide recruiting for the trial, which lasts approximately six months for those enrolled. For more information, call 975-7117 or 934-1903.

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The Testosterone Trial

Men ages 65 or older who have at least one of these symptoms: difficulty walking a quarter-mile, less interest in sex or reduced vitality — may be eligible to enroll in the Testosterone Trial.

Half of the men enrolled will use a testosterone gel that they apply to the trunk of their body daily for one year. The other half will receive a placebo gel. Participants also will be asked to complete questionnaires and perform physical function and memory tests.

Researchers will follow enrollees for an additional year to see if symptoms are improved or if any adverse effects become apparent.

Men who are at high risk for prostate cancer aren’t eligible for the trial, neither are men who have had past testosterone treatment nor those whose testosterone is low for reasons other than aging.

Participants who are enrolled in the Testosterone Trial will be compensated for their time.

Call the Preventive Medicine clinic at 934-2294 for more information.

Yet, the gel used in this trial is not an experimental drug. Lewis says “A man can go today and get a prescription for the exact same testosterone gel we are testing, so it is critically important that we know what this stuff is doing.

The prostate relies heavily on testosterone to function properly, but Lewis says some research has shown testosterone replacement may cause the prostate to become enlarged, giving men symptoms of urinary obstruction. There also is potential evidence that testosterone therapy may speed the growth of existing prostate cancer.

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Testosterone risks

There is no guarantee that testosterone therapy will benefit men and none that replacing testosterone won’t lead to more health problems for some.
T he Carol W. Samuelson Lectureship is one of Max Michael’s favorite events each year because it honors the friend and former Jefferson County health officer for whom it is named and because the lecture topics typically are upbeat. Michael, M.D., the dean of the School of Public Health, can thank a friend for helping secure this year’s lecture — Patrick Coughlin, the attorney who helped end the Joe Camel ad campaign with the landmark $12.5 billion recovery for California cities and counties in 1998 settlement with the tobacco companies.

"Mr. Coughlin is building a house on Smith Lake, and his architect is a friend of mine," Michael says. "He told me about Mr. Coughlin taking on Joe Camel and asked, ‘Don’t you think that’s a pretty good public health topic?’"

Coughlin spoke at the Hill University Center Alumni Auditorium Oct. 20 about his almost decade-long legal battle with R.J. Reynolds over the company’s Joe Camel advertising campaign targeted to children under 18. He also talked about his role as a consultant with the Jefferson County Department of Health on the recently awarded $13.3 million Communities Putting Prevention to Work grant — $57 million of which will target tobacco prevention.

Coughlin met with Jefferson County Department of Health officials prior to his lecture to offer some ideas on using the money to support their campaign.

“They want to do really practical and useful things,” Coughlin says. “We know smoking causes diseases, it’s addictive and it targets our children, but we only have so much money, so what do we do? We talked about things like how you can’t sell beer within 1,000 feet of a school, so why not cigarettes? How about having a tobacco-free campus? Target stores don’t sell cigarettes, so encourage other corporations that do business in Jefferson County to follow their lead.”

Jefferson County’s tobacco use prevention and cessation initiative will promote changes in policies to reduce smoking opportunities and reduce access to tobacco products. The county will encourage coverage of cessation services and products through worksite insurance and health policies. The county also will continue its efforts to highlight the negative aspects of tobacco use via an aggressive educational campaign including social networking sites.

**Documents key to case**

Coughlin’s route to where he is today has been long but successful. He has been lead counsel for several major securities matters, including one of the largest class-action securities cases to go to trial against Apple Computers in the early 1990s.

Additional prominent securities class actions prosecuted by Coughlin include the Enron litigation, in which $7.3 billion was recovered; the Quest litigation, in which a $445 million recovery was obtained; and the HealthSouth litigation, in which a settlement of $800 million was recovered.

But ending the Joe Camel cartoon ad campaign is one of the most significant, if for no other reason than it marked the first time a tobacco company lost in litigation.

Coughlin’s team of attorneys obtained and read more than 30 million pages of tobacco company documents that dated as far back as the 1930s. It was the information within some of these documents that lead to the historic settlement.

“The things they wrote in their own words in these documents are pretty incredible to read,” Coughlin says. “They researched if tobacco caused cancer on the side, in other countries, and had the data. They were also trying to figure out what people needed to get the best hit of nicotine. They also figured out that adults don’t smoke. They realized, ‘If 90 percent of people pick up their first cigarette before they turn 18 — before it’s legal — that’s our market.’ Their own research showed if you smoked 100 cigarettes as a kid, you’d be hooked.”

Coughlin says he was able to spend the millions of dollars needed to get the never-before-publicly-seen documents because he worked at a large firm with the monetary resources needed to battle R.J. Reynolds.

“I was used to spending millions of dollars if the reward could be seen at the end,” he says. “I didn’t know what would happen with the Joe Camel thing. I just knew that it was outrageous that Joe Camel was as real as Mickey Mouse, who had been around for 50 years. Is that by accident, or is it deliberate?”

Coughlin says tobacco companies had been involved in 800 lawsuits between the 1960s and 1990s, but had never lost — largely because they had never produced any of the damaging documents even though all previous lawsuits asked for them. The companies said the documents didn’t exist.

In fact, Coughlin says tobacco executives talked internally about how addictive it was and how it did cause disease.

“They then figured out it was only children who were the target audience and that was in 1970s, well before anyone else figured that out,” Coughlin says. “Then they figured out that it wasn’t just nicotine that was addictive, but when it was combined with other drugs and chemicals, it was twice as addictive to children but not adults. That’s why children start smoking and stay smoking. Your whole physiology changes over the years. That’s why adults don’t smoke. It’s not only because it’s a nasty habit, it’s because their brains aren’t forming and those compounds don’t work the same on an adult brain versus a forming brain. Research has shown that. The tobacco companies were 25 years ahead of the medical community on addiction and cancer, and they had this stuff.”

That’s why Coughlin continues to help others — like the Jefferson County Department of Health — when he can.

Coughlin says the tobacco companies’ strategy had always been to reach young people, which makes the Communities Putting Prevention to Work grant a small but key piece of the puzzle in reaching today’s youth.

“The fact is we’ve got limited resources, so what are we going to do with them,” he says. “Tobacco companies spend an average of $2.5 billion a year here in Alabama to further their agenda, and we spend an average of $2 million fighting them. It’s not really a fair fight. They’re doing a lot of things with their money, especially making sure laws don’t get passed (to regulate them).”

**Samuelson lecturer aids JeffCo in fight against teen smoking**

_Continued from page 1_

Chapman says: Some of the alterations are up-front and in your face while others are incredibly subtle.

These college students are focused on developing their craft and vision in pursuit of becoming artists, Chapman says. They are challenged to express themselves in incredible ways.

“By creating these altered masterworks,” Chapman says, “they are bombarded with cliché after cliché after cliché. But they are challenged to express themselves in incredibly subtle ways.”

**ART**

Chapman says, “They have a strong desire to change something even if for only one night,” he says. “It’s not only because it’s a nasty habit, it’s because their brains aren’t forming and those compounds don’t work the same on an adult brain versus a forming brain. Research has shown that. The tobacco companies were 25 years ahead of the medical community on addiction and cancer, and they had this stuff.”

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Chapman says: Some of the alterations are up-front and in your face while others are incredibly subtle.

These college students are focused on developing their craft and vision in pursuit of becoming artists, Chapman says. They are challenged to express themselves in unique and creative ways, yet at the same time, he says, they are bombarded with cliché images and pedestal works that were never intended to be original but in fact mimic everything we have already seen.

“This assignment affords these artists multiple options to this dilemma — a chance to strike back, to take the tacky and cliché imagery and pedestal works that were never intended to be original but in fact mimic everything we have already seen.

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Edward Partridge, M.D., has been a part of the American Cancer Society (ACS) from the day he finished his gynecology/oncology training at the UAB School of Medicine in 1973.

On Friday, Nov. 5, Partridge, director of the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center, began his one-year term as president of the ACS National Board of Directors. He knows how to get things done, and he has work to do.

Partridge is a renowned physician and leader in the fight to reduce cancer disparities based on race and ethnicity. His early work helped gain Alabama participation in the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, which allows women diagnosed with an abnormal mamogram to receive treatment regardless of financial means.

The ACS has lofty goals for the next 18 months as it works to reverse its slide. One of the key goals is doubling the number of lives saved daily.

Partridge, a Demopolis native, will lead this charge for the next 12 months. He talked to the UAB Reporter recently about this challenge, the growth of the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center and efforts to eliminate cancer as a major public health problem.

Q. What does it mean to you to be president of the Board of Directors of the ACS?
A. It’s amazing to be part of an organization that — largely because of some of the work we’ve done here at UAB — helps avert 340 cancer deaths each day because of the work begun 20 years ago.

I’m proud of what we’ve accomplished and know there is a lot more we can do.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish as president of the American Cancer Society?
A. What we want to do as an organization — and I’m proud to be one of the leaders in the process — is transform ourselves to be able to affect the nation in such a way that we have 1,000 fewer deaths from cancer each day. We have enough knowledge. We need to look at our programs, how we deliver them and the things that are going to be the greatest bang for the buck and really make a difference in people’s lives.

We’re going to spend the next 18 months doing that. Twelve of those months, I’ll be part of the leadership reinventing itself. It’s a great opportunity to be a leader in the society.

Q. How will your new position spotlight the work of UAB and the Comprehensive Cancer Center?
A. As the president of the ACS, you do have a national podium. I’m proud to represent the American Cancer Society and the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center in this role. I find that what we do in both organizations is very complementary. We have the same mission to eliminate cancer as a major public health problem.

We need research, outreach and cancer-control programs that are parallel. My role as the ACS president will only enhance the visibility of UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Q. How has the Cancer Center grown and what progress do you anticipate in coming years?
A. The UAB CCC has been in existence now for almost 40 years. It was one of the original National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer centers and has grown substantially in that period of time.

I think there are two areas in which we really distinguish ourselves. One is translational research, where we take a finding from the bench and get it into human clinical trials. We do that exceptionally well, and we have a number of success stories in which we’ve actually changed the standard of care worldwide.

The second is reducing cancer disparities. There are groups of individuals, usually those with lower education, less income and less access to care, that suffer disproportionately from cancer. We have an 18-year history of developing programs that make a difference in those underserved populations, and we’re proud of our successes there.

Q. What effect has being in Alabama had on the CCC?
A. I’m an Alabama native, and I’ve been here for all of my training and all my life. There are two things that I believe have made a difference. One is the interest in cancer disparities. I think our geographic location makes it almost a moral imperative for our institution.

Second, 40 years ago UAB was a young medical school that didn’t have a critical mass of scientists; our leaders recognized that we were going to have to be collaborative and bring different scientists together. That collaborative spirit has enabled us to be effective in our translational research and given us the opportunity to be successful.

The fact this cancer center is located here and in Alabama has really led to our areas of expertise.

Q. How close are we to eliminating cancer as a major public health problem?
A. We have the knowledge today to eliminate about half of the deaths that occur from cancer each day. Sometimes in your lifetime, and maybe even mine, we’re going to realize our vision to eliminate cancer as a public health problem. If we can control tobacco, increase physical activity and healthy eating and make sure people are age-appropriately screened for cancer then we can make a major impact in cancer today without other discoveries.

We also have to make sure all individuals with cancer have access to the highest quality care.

The other exciting thing is we’ve unraveled the human genome and now recognize that cancer is really a genetic disease. As we understand those genetic abnormalities and begin to manipulate those pathways, we have the potential to really affect the care of patients with cancer or identify patients who are at high risk and modify that risk.

It’s going to be eliminated as a major public health problem this century — probably in the first 30 years. There’s no question about it. The only question is how fast it’s going to occur, and that’s only limited by the nation’s investment in cancer programs.
Experimental drug for Hodgkin's lymphoma shows promise

An experimental drug for Hodgkin's lymphoma studied at UAB showed beneficial effects in stopping tumor growth with moderate side-effects, according to findings published Nov. 4 in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The Phase I trial was designed to establish a maximum tolerated dose of brentuximab vedotin (SGN-35), a combination of the monoclonal antibody cAC10 and an antitubulin agent, monomethyl auristatin E (MMAE), developed by Seattle Genetics. Using a dose-escalating protocol, the researchers administered a dose of 0.1 to 3.6 mg per kilogram of body weight.

“Our primary goal was to establish the maximum tolerated dose, one that would not cause adverse side-effects of SGN-35,” said Andres Forero-Torres, M.D., an associate scientist in the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center and a senior author of the study. “In the process, we were pleased to discover that positive responses were observed in 17 of the 45 patients involved in the study, including 11 complete remissions.”

As many as 30 percent of Hodgkin’s disease patients don’t respond to conventional therapy, and the disease kills an estimated 1,300 people annually in the United States alone. Because Hodgkin’s disease frequently strikes young adults, there is a significant social impact from these premature deaths.

Forero-Torres says tumor regression was noted in 36 of the 42 patients who could be evaluated and the duration of response to the drug lasted more than 9 months.

“There is a large percentage of patients with Hodgkin’s lymphoma or anaplastic large-cell lymphoma who do not respond well to traditional therapies such as chemotherapy or autologous stem-cell transplantation,” said Forero-Torres. “SNG-35 appears to be satisfactorily tolerated at 1.8 mg and may offer promise to those patients for whom other therapies have proven to be unsuccessful.”

The authors report that the most commonly observed adverse affects were fatigue, fever, diarrhea, nausea, neutropenia (low white blood-cell count) and peripheral neuropathy (tingling, numbness or pain in the hands and feet). Most adverse effects were classified as grade 1 or 2 (out of 4), which is considered mild to moderate.

The research was funded by Seattle Genetics. Collaborators are the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Washington University, St. Louis and Weill Medical College of Cornell University.

Medical students offer free women’s health screening

Equal Access Birmingham, UAB’s medical student group devoted to improving health care for under-served citizens, will partner with local gynecologists to host a free Women’s Health Day Screening at M-POWER Clinic.

Services provided include free gynecological exams, STD testing, pap smears and women’s health education.

The screening will be held from 2:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Monday, Nov. 15, in the M-Power Clinic at 4022 Fourth Ave. South, Birmingham. Screenings are on a first-come, first-served basis.

UAB named national research center to reduce cancer disparities by NCI

The UAB Deep South Network for Cancer Control, part of the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center, has received a five-year, $6 million grant from the National Cancer Institute to continue its work in reducing cancer disparities in minority and medically under-served, poor populations in Alabama and Mississippi.

The fund, from the NCI’s Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities, establishes UAB as one of six National Community Network Program Centers. This is the third five-year grant the Deep South Network has received from the NCI.

The Deep South Network targets two poor, rural regions – Alabama’s Black Belt and the Mississippi Delta – and two urban areas – Jefferson County and the Hattiesburg/Laurel, Miss., metropolitan region. The network has trained more than 1,000 volunteers in these communities, called community health advisors trained as research partners (CHARP), to educate family and friends about the importance of prevention and early detection of cancer.

“As the only NCI-designated comprehensive cancer center in a five-state region, UAB has an obligation to address the South’s cancer burden, said Edward E. Patridge, M.D., director of the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center. “The work of the Deep South Network is highly significant, because it allows community leaders to partner with our researchers. This grassroots work, with a scientific basis, already is bringing our cancer rates down.”

Physical education students complete safety training

A group of 21 students from the UAB Department of Human Studies physical education program completed the PREPARE training course offered by the National Center for Sports Safety (NCSS). The program, in the College of Arts and Sciences School of Education, teaches strategies to identify and prevent potential life-threatening situations and injuries on the sports field plus skills to best respond in emergency situations.

The UAB students, many of whom are coaches at Birmingham-area schools, were selected for the program by faculty member Nandra Nino, Ph.D., who wanted the students trained to keep players safe during the sports season. The three-hour PREPARE course was provided by NCSS through a grant from Alabama State University.

Curing cancer, one dessert at a time with Sweet on a Cure

It’s never been more delicious to help fight cancer than participating in Sweet on a Cure, a dessert-filled week Nov. 8-14, supported by Birmingham-area bakeries, cafes, restaurants and caterers.

Participating eateries will sell specially designated sweets and donate 108 percent of the proceeds to the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center to support leading-edge cancer research by promising young researchers. Find a participating Sweet partner near you at www.sweetonacure.org or call 934-0034 or e-mail info@ccc.uab.edu for more information.

Sweet on a cure proceeds will help young investigators test new theories and lay the groundwork for advancing scientific discoveries that could lead to substantial federal grant funding – and possibly a cure.

Nearly 25,000 Alabamians are diagnosed with cancer annually, and Alabama ranks among the top 10 states for deaths caused by the disease. The UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center is Alabama’s only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center and one of only 40 in the nation.

The UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center’s Young Supporters Board launched Sweet on a Cure in 2009 as a dynamic way to encourage Birmingham’s vibrant restaurant community to support the fight against cancer. The Young Supporters Board comprises 40 young professionals dedicated to the mission of the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Andres Forero-Torres is a senior author of a recent study that showed an experimental drug for Hodgkin’s lymphoma stopped tumor growth with moderate side-effects. “We were pleased to discover that positive responses were observed in 17 of the 45 patients involved in the study,” Forero-Torres says.
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Poncho Sanchez
& His Latin Orchestra
Friday, November 12 • 8 p.m.

The Bollywood Experience
A FAMILY PERFORMANCE
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ADULTS $10
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