Breakthrough in Alzheimer’s may be found in new drug

Alzheimer’s disease is a neurodegenerative disorder that affects more than 5.3 million families in the United States each year and unleashes a path of emotional and financial heartache for patients and their families. The disease carries an annual societal price tag of $148 billion, according to the Alzheimer’s Association. It destroys brain cells, which causes memory loss and problems with thinking, and the behavior of patients with the disease can deteriorate to the point that it affects work, lifelong hobbies and social function. Alzheimer’s gets progressively worse, and it is fatal. But an experimental drug known as bapineuzumab could change all that.

UAB researchers are participating in national and international Phase III Alzheimer’s clinical trials in which they administer the drug to patients, and there is real hope that bapineuzumab will change the underlying pathology of the disease, ultimately eradicating it from the body.

Lakeshore Foundation, UAB launch joint research effort

The Lakeshore Foundation and UAB have joined resources to develop a world-class research program in rehabilitation science — the Lakeshore Foundation/UAB Research Collaborative.

“Every gift that UAB receives, no matter what, makes a difference in our ability to serve our students, faculty, patients and community,” Kahn said.

2009 has been UAB’s best fundraising year to date

Because the commitment of our donors — is that it was such a phenomenal success despite the depressed economy. “We are so grateful to all our donors who contributed to make this year — and this decade — our best ever.”

A few of the larger gifts received during the year included $6 million from the McKnight Brain Research Foundation for the Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute, $5 million from Parent Advocates Down Syndrome for the Adult Down Syndrome Clinic, $5 million from Jane Stephens Comer for the Alys Robinson Stephens Performing Arts Center youth outreach program, $5 million from an anonymous donor for scholarships and unrestricted support, and $2 million from Lakeshore Foundation for an endowed chair in Rehabilitation Services.

“Every gift that UAB receives, no matter the amount, makes a difference in our ability to serve our students, faculty, patients and community,” Kahn said.
Blood-donation efforts reach goal

When department supervisors urged UAB and University of Alabama Health Services Foundation employees to donate blood during an emergency drive on Sept. 29 — the day before the end of the fiscal year — employees responded.

The drive was a last-minute effort to help UAB reach its goal of collecting 8,000 units of blood in the fiscal year.

Vicky Vinson, who works in Health System Information Services, was the 8,000th donor. Along with 7,999 others, she helped the UAB/Red Cross Partnership reach its unit goal. The grand total of blood units collected for the year stood at 8,070 at day’s end.

“We cannot begin to thank the thousands of UAB employees, students and visitors who literally rolled up their sleeves to enable us to reach our ambitious goal of 8,000 units,” said Michael Waldrum, M.D., CEO of UAB Hospital.

The hospital will need 30,000 to 35,000 units of blood in this fiscal year, and the new goal for blood donation at UAB is even more ambitious — 9,501.

“We cannot begin to thank the thousands of UAB employees, students and visitors who literally rolled up their sleeves to enable us to reach our ambitious goal of 8,000 units,” said Michael Waldrum, M.D., CEO of UAB Hospital.

“The new goal will be a major undertaking, but if only half of our more than 18,000 employees were to donate just once this year, we would make that goal,” said Anthony Patterson, UAB Hospital associate vice president.

“This is an easy way for each of us, as individuals, to make a difference in our community.”

Read more about UAB’s blood donation efforts at main.uab.edu/Sites/MediaRelations/articles/70485.

Policy reminder regarding political activities

Periodically, UAB re-publicizes existing policies so that new employees or new administrators will be kept informed of the policies and guidelines governing UAB.

Policy 304 of the 2007 Combined Board Manual, “Political Activities of University Personnel,” states that no university employee may seek or hold public office and remain in the employ of the university if such activities could or would result in a conflict of interest or interference with the employee’s carrying out his or her university responsibilities.

Employer who intend to seek election to public office must first obtain written consent from the chancellor of the University of Alabama System through appropriate reporting channels. In cases where the workload of the employee is the primary concern, leaves of absence during periods of running for office or serving in public office may be considered. For more information on the policy, go to www.uasystem.ua.edu/board/2007/CombinedBoardManual.pdf.

Nagy needs pledges as he accelerates for a cancer cure

Tim Nagy, Ph.D., desperately wants a cure for cancer and he’s putting his peddle to the medal to raise the funds necessary to make it happen.

Nagy, professor and vice chair for research in the Department of Nutrition Sciences, is competing in the driver-pledge competition “Accelerating a Cancer Cure” to raise research funds for the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center.

The Cancer Center has teamed with PBOC Motorsports Club to sponsor the PBOC Points Race event, which will take place Nov. 14-15 at Barber Motorsports Park.

Drivers participating in the event, including Nagy, are raising money through pledges until Nov. 15.

To pledge, send an e-mail to Emily Heide at emily.heide@ccc.uab.edu with your name, Nagy’s name, your pledge amount, your home mailing address and your e-mail address. All who pledge will receive frequent fund-raising updates to see which driver is leading the pack.

Nagy is one of the founders of “Accelerating a Cancer Cure.” His research studies the relationships between obesity and disease, particularly cancer.

For more, visit www3.ccc.uab.edu/accelerating.html.

Theatre UAB to present ‘Eurydice’ Nov. 11-14, Nov. 18-21

Theatre UAB will present “Eurydice,” written by Sarah Ruhl, at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 11-14 and Nov. 18-21 and at 2 p.m. Nov. 22 in the Alys Stephens Center Odess Theatre. The play will be directed by Karla Koskinen, M.F.A.

Tickets are $12, $6 for students, $10 for UAB employees and senior citizens.

Good one! Assistant Professor of Accounting and Finance James Werrell doesn’t look too upset after getting dunked at the School of Business “Dunk Your Favorite Professor” event held this past Tuesday. The event was hosted by the school’s chapter of the American Marketing Association and was one of the many campuswide events of Homecoming week.
Connie Bonds
Employee of the Year for 2008-09

Connie Bonds isn’t someone who likes to talk about herself or her accomplishments. She just wants to do her job as an office associate II as the Department of Nutrition Sciences Clinical Services — and do it well.

“Ask me to organize something, figure out something human resources-related, then I’m in my element,” she says. “Ask me to do something I’ve never done before, and I’m up and running. In this job I don’t know from one day to the next what I’m going to be doing.”

“There’s always something for me to learn, and I like that.”

Bonds’ co-workers commended her dedication, drive and willingness to help others when she was selected Employee of the Month in August 2008. Now, Bonds has been selected the 2008-09 UAB Employee of the Year. She was chosen from the 12 Employee of the Month award winners during the fiscal year by the UAB Employee of the Month/Year Committee.

“It’s just a great honor,” Bonds says. “I don’t know what to say other than I enjoy doing what I do. You’re only as good as the people you work with, and there are some great people here. I like all of the doctors here and the staff. They’re all great to work with. My job is a busy job, and that’s what I like the most about it.”

UAB President Carol Garrison will host an invitation-only presentation ceremony and reception honoring Bonds with the highest non-academic employee award the UAB School of Health Professions (SHP). “The collaborative creates an environment in which together we can validate successful therapies, develop promising therapeutic strategies and disseminate the results to the world rehabilitation community.”

Lakeshore Foundation’s strengths lie in its wide range of fitness, recreation, athletic and educational programs for people with conditions such as spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, stroke, amputation and visual impairment. The Foundation also serves persons with arthritis, diabetes, chronic pain, cardiac conditions and many other related disorders. Lakeshore is also an official U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Training Site providing athletes with access to sports science, on-site housing and a world-class facility. The Foundation also provides fitness, recreation and sports activities to severely injured military personnel through its Lima Foxtrot programs.

CAMPUS NEWS

LAKESHORE

CONTINUED from page 1

build our research program, it made perfect sense to us to sit down with UAB, one of the leading research institutions in this country,” Underwood said. “A good working relationship with the School of Health Professions was already in place through several collaborative projects.

The collaborative is thought to be the first of its kind between a major academic research university and an organization that serves the physically disabled by providing physical activity, sport and education. The research collaborative will identify, develop, validate and apply new programs and technologies having a positive impact on the lives of people with physically disabling conditions.

“Lakeshore is world-renowned for its fitness, recreation and sports programs, as is UAB for research expertise and infrastructure,” said Harold Jones, Ph.D., dean of the UAB School of Health Professions (SHP). “The collaborative creates an environment in which together we can validate successful therapies, develop promising therapeutic strategies and disseminate the results to the world rehabilitation community.”

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ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

CONTINUED from page 1

“There has been much effort and money put into this research, and there is hope that Alzheimer’s patients,” says Cleveland Kinney, M.D., Ph.D., professor of psychiatry and behavioral neurology. “What’s so exciting about these new studies and this new drug in particular is the possibility of changing the pathology of the illness. I don’t know if we’ll ever cure it, but I think it will be managed by a cocktail of medicines and patients will be able to live a normal life.”

Bapineuzumab appears to undermine the grip the disease-causing proteins have on the brain, and that is the reason there is promise in Alzheimer’s efficacy. Current Alzheimer’s medications, including Aricept, Exelon and Razadyne — the three most popular cholinesterase inhibitors used to treat patients — act as managers of the disease. They maximize the remaining brain activity and slow the disease.

Bapineuzumab uses an antibody not commonly found in the patient’s blood to target Alzheimer’s. It is designed to bind to a particular protein called beta amyloid protein, which accumulates in the brain and forms plaques related to the progression of the disease. It is hoped that bapineuzumab will attach to the beta amyloid protein in the brain and help the body remove it. Researchers also believe the drug will prevent the build-up of beta amyloid protein.

“It’s particularly fascinating that as the study progresses and the plaques are dissolved, the brain shrinks because it’s getting rid of space-occupying lesions,” Kinney says. “But the patients theoretically do better over time, which means they are re-establishing connections in the brain they had lost because the plaques were there.”

“If you get rid of the plaques the patients do better, the brain shrinks and the connections are re-made,” he says. “If that’s the case, that means the brain is far more plastic than anyone ever thought possible. That’s what we think is going to happen.”

The studies look at two different patient populations — those carrying what is known as apolipoprotein ε4 gene (APOE ε4) alleles and those who do not. APOE contains the instructions needed to make a protein that helps carry cholesterol in the bloodstream and comes in several different forms. Three of those alleles occur more frequently than others. Dozens of studies have confirmed that the allele identified as APOE ε4 increases the risk of developing Alzheimer’s, but the way that happens is not yet understood.

Administered through infusions

Patients in the trials undergo an infusion of bapineuzumab every 13 weeks in addition to several MRI scans and neuropsychological testing. More than 100 sites in the United States are participating in the randomized study funded by Elan, but UAB is the only participating site in Alabama. Numerous sites around the world are participating in an identical study funded by Wyeth. UAB is enrolling participants in both studies.

The studies are double-blind and placebo-controlled. Sixty percent of patients enrolled in the studies will receive the drug, and 40 percent will not. Participants will be given the opportunity to receive the study drug in an extension study after the 18-month study has been completed.

UAB is in the top 25 percent in the country for enrolling participants in the studies, and more are being sought. Potential participants can call the Office of Psychiatric Research at 934-2484 to be screened. Patients currently taking Aricept, Exelon, Razadyne or other Alzheimer’s drugs will continue to take their existing medications in addition to the trial medication.

Those who are eligible to participate in the study must be between ages 50 and 88, have a diagnosis of probable Alzheimer’s disease, and have a caregiver who is willing to be involved in the study.

“Something will come out in the not too distant future that I think will be pretty miraculous,” Kinney says. “If it weren’t promising, we wouldn’t be participating in the study.”

Thursday, Nov. 19 at 3 p.m. in the Ireland Room on the third floor of the Lister Hill Library.

For more on Bonds, visit main.uab.edu/Sites/reporter/articles/51441/.
Muscular dystrophy has presented Leticia Waldon with many difficulties throughout her life, but she has never let it keep her from earning a living. While decreased mobility and muscle strength tend to be her biggest obstacles, her drive and determination are the traits that consistently enable her to overcome them. And now, Waldon has been recognized as a model of employee excellence to others with disabilities.

The Birmingham Area Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities recently recognized Waldon, a UAB Human Resources associate, as the Large Business Employee of the Year. The award is given annually to an Alabamian with a disability for outstanding achievement in overcoming significant limitations to secure and maintain gainful employment. It was presented to Waldon at the recent National Disability Employment Awareness Month Awards Luncheon at The Club.

“It was really an honor even to be nominated, and a complete shock to win,” Waldon says. “UAB deserves a lot of credit too, because the staff here has done everything they can to help me and give me the ability to do everything I need to do in my job. It makes you feel more valued.”

Medical West Hospital, an affiliate of the UAB Health System, also was selected the Large Employer of the Year by the group, which goes to an employer with more than 1,000 employees that has demonstrated outstanding efforts to recruit, accommodate, employ, retain and promote employees with disabilities.

Revia Lewis, a UAB Human Resources staffing specialist, was nominated for the Professional of the Year, a UAB Human Resources staffing representative and retaining a Valued Employee Program (RAVE) Coordinator Sherri Moultrie.

“It can be very challenging to find employment these days, let alone with a competitive employer,” Moultrie says. “However, Ms. Lewis has been instrumental in working with RAVE and placing employees in temporary positions on campus. Many times these positions turn into permanent jobs.

“I’ve worked with Ms. Lewis and referred individuals to her on many occasions, and she’s truly shown an exceptional commitment to assisting individuals with disabilities to secure employment here at UAB.”

Thinking of others

Lewis, who has worked in Human Resources for the past 11 years, says she works diligently to find areas where disabled employees can thrive.

“I put myself in their place,” she says. “It could be me on the other side of that desk interviewing, trying to earn a livelihood. I try to be open-minded and do the best I can to place them.”

Moultrie says Waldon has made an impact on all who have come in contact with her during her 19 months as a UAB employee.

“Leticia just has such a great personality and a positive outlook on life,” Moultrie says. “She lives her life to the fullest, and she’s made significant contributions to UAB Human Resources and Benefits. Seeing her at work each day reinforces the fact that individuals with disabilities can make significant contributions for organizations, as she has for UAB.”

Waldon says she has lived with muscular dystrophy since she was diagnosed as a toddler. It didn’t stop her from receiving her college degree at UAB in 2004, and she worked for the Birmingham-Jefferson Transit Authority prior to returning to UAB in her current capacity in April 2008.

Waldon says she appreciates the help she has been given at UAB by Moultrie and the RAVE Program, which reconfigured her workspace to enhance her mobility so she could file, use the copy machine and easily access the telephone.

“Many times people with disabilities have so many other hurdles we have to jump through and obstacles we have to face,” Waldon says. “The RAVE Program really does enable us to do our jobs and gives us the opportunity to perform at a high level.”

The UAB RAVE Program provides disability-management services when an employee’s job performance, job stability or promotional opportunities are affected by a physical, mental or emotional impairment. Through an innovative partnership between UAB and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, the UAB-RAVE Program assists current employees and their departments, job seekers going through the application process and employees returning from long-term disability or medical leave. Moultrie says the RAVE Program is a “one-stop shop” for information and assistance on disability issues.

Contact Moultrie at srmoult@uab.edu for more information on the RAVE Program.
Donna’s relentless drive fuels ROTC program, Tri-Blazers

H e rides his bicycle anywhere from 100 to 120 miles per week. He also runs 20 to 35 miles per week and adds another two to six miles in the swimming pool.

And Lt. Col. Kelly Donna does all of this simply because he loves it.

“My always had an extreme personality,” says Donna, professor of military science and head of UAB’s Reserve Officer’s Training Corps (ROTC) program. “I guess you could say I never needed any help being motivated.”

Donna’s relentless drive is a perfect fit for an ROTC program with the goal of shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

“Whether they decide to stay in the program and join the Army or go into the business world, we develop leaders,” Donna says.

“We have to train, shape and work these kids into being leaders. It’s not something that’s natural for many people.”

As a two-tour Iraq veteran, pilot and a Bronze Star recipient, Donna is comfortable in his role as a leader. He also had the opportunity to serve with other leaders and learn from them.

The two traits he says are most important in a leader are initiative and integrity.

“The initiative, the can-do attitude, selfless service — all of that goes into being a leader,” he says. “We need leaders who are self-starters and willing to learn.”

The ROTC program

UAB’s ROTC program began in fall 1980 and was designated by the federal government as a host institution in 1983. Students from Samford, Miles, Montevallo, Birmingham-Southern and Jefferson State also can be part of the program.

The program currently has 122 cadets, and those interested in joining the ROTC do not have to sign up for the U.S. Army, Army Reserves or National Guard.

“You can test it out first and see if it’s for you,” Donna says. “There’s no contract required initially. If you decide to stay, you have to sign a contract your junior year, and you go into the Army Reserves, National Guard or active duty as a second lieutenant.”

The ROTC program gives cadets an opportunity to gain practical experience and receive financial assistance for college. The program enables cadets to compete for scholarships to pay for tuition, books and a stipend. All contracted students receive a monthly living allowance.

It also gives students the opportunity to compete in events such as the Ranger Challenge at Ft. Benning, Ga. The Ranger Challenge is the Army’s ROTC varsity sport, which tests the top cadets in the country in a tough 72-hour, mental and physical competition. This year’s challenge took place Oct. 22-25 and pitted the best of UAB’s cadets against 42 other college and university ROTC squads in events including marksmanship skills, fitness test, water obstacles, land navigation, 10k road march, weapons assembly, obstacle course and written tests.

Running the Tri-Blazers

Many of the students participating in the Ranger Challenge have joined Donna in another endeavor — the UAB Tri-Blazers.

The Tri-Blazers are UAB’s triathlon team. Donna formed the team after the Army stationed him at UAB 18 months ago. By November 2008 he had 22 cadets on the team. Now he has 42 team members who are recognized as a collegiate team by the USA Triathlon (USAT).

“When I was stationed here I said to myself if there’s not a triathlon team here, I’m going to make one,” he says. “I started competing in triathlons in 1988. I’m 42 now, and it’s a challenge, but I love it.”

All UAB faculty, staff, students and alumni are eligible to be members of the team. The team will compete in the 2010 national championship April 17, in Lubbock, Texas.

Only a few members of the team run faster than Donna — something he says motivates the team’s members.

“When you have an old man out there in front of you, that’s motivation to get faster,” he says.

Donna was a member of the 2007 All-Army Olympic Triathlon Team and is a USAT-certified coach. He has participated in numerous triathlons, averaging a time of two hours 11 minutes for the Olympic distance.

Donna also has participated in two Iron Man 70.3 series events, including the national championship in Tuscaloosa this past August. In those events, Donna had to complete a 1.2-mile swim, a 56-mile bike ride and a 13.1-mile run. He did it in five hours and 28 minutes.

“I made the cut for the national championships at 42 years old,” he says. “That was a goal for me the year, no doubt.”

What is the hardest part of competing? Donna says it’s different for each individual, but for him, age and injury are quickly becoming key obstacles; his body is beginning to betray him after years of pounding.

“The swim used to be the most difficult aspect for me, but it has grown tremendously,” Donna says. “I have sciatic nerve damage now, so running has become harder. I’ve always been a strong runner, so it’s hard to watch that slip away. But when you’ve been in the sport this long, it’s hard on your body.”

Don’t expect Donna to leave the sport, however. He intends to coach the Tri-Blazers as long as he is at UAB and plans to develop his business Tri-1 Basics, a boot camp for tri-athletes.

“I’ve learned a lot along the way, and my job is to pass that along,” Donna says. “It’s just like with military. I’ve got 24 years of experience in the Army I can pass along to the cadets and 22 years of experience in triathlons that I can pass on to the Tri-Blazers.”

Contact Jennifer Scott at tws@uab.edu or 934-8749 to learn more about the ROTC program. Contact Donna at coach@jtriblazers.org if you are interested in joining the Tri-Blazers team.

1917 Clinic’s Raper named to Alabama Nursing Hall of Fame

J ames Raper, D.S.N., C.R.N.P., director of the 1917 HIV/AIDS Outpatient and Infectious Disease Clinic at UAB and associate professor of medicine and nursing, has been inducted into the Alabama Nursing Hall of Fame. Raper is known for his commitment to the care of patients, especially those infected with HIV.

“I feel extremely honored since there are more than 70,000 nurses in Alabama,” Raper said of his induction.

“I want to share this honor with my nursing and physici-
Kelly seeks ‘mo’ help for prostate, testicular cancer research

What is Movember?
The Movember Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that runs the men’s health initiative, Movember. The “mo” (slang for moustache) and Movember, the 11th month of the year (formerly known as November), come together each year to create the world’s largest movement for men’s health, bringing much-needed awareness and funding to cancers that affect men, specifically prostate and testicular cancer.

• Register at www.movember.com and join Kelly’s Mo Health UAB team.
• Create a new look by grooming your moustache or starting Movember 1 clean-shaven.
• Motivate your friends and family to donate and support your growing efforts.

Kelly has never had prostate or testicular cancer, but he nevertheless has decided to do what he can to help change the face of men’s health. He joined the “Movember” campaign hoping to have the opportunity to talk about these cancers with others — and encourage people to donate to the research efforts.

Prostate cancer screenings are one way to monitor for the disease.

The ACS says that health-care professionals should discuss the potential benefits and limitations of prostate cancer early detection testing with men before any such testing begins. This discussion should include an offer for testing with the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test and digital rectal exam (DRE) yearly, beginning at age 50, to men who are at average risk of prostate cancer and have at least a 10-year life expectancy. After such a discussion, those men who favor testing should be tested. Men should actively take part in this decision by learning about prostate cancer and the pros and cons of early detection and treatment of prostate cancer.

This discussion should take place starting at age 40 for men at high risk of developing prostate cancer. This includes African-American men and men who have a first-degree relative (father, brother, or son) diagnosed with prostate cancer at an early age (younger than age 70).

“We believe it is very important for men to be screened,” says Erik Busby, M.D., assistant professor of urologic oncology. “There were some recently reported studies that indicated testing may not be prudent, but those studies had some major flaws.

“We do believe that patients need to be educated on the pros and cons of screening prior to embarking down that road. If you have a history of prostate cancer in your family or are African-American, talk to your doctor about screenings.”

Extensive research at UAB is under way in prostate cancer, says Busby.

“In prostate cancer we are looking at different markers to help identify the presence and extent of prostate cancer,” Busby says. “We also are looking at chemo preventive approaches to prevent the disease from occurring. Additionally, we are examining the role of the immune system at preventing development or progression of the disease.”

Lighthearted approach

The Movember Foundation uses the moustache as a way to pull men into the fundraising effort. It’s a lighthearted way for men to learn more about the diseases and the importance of talking to their physicians about them, and to raise money for research.

Busby says men often avoid talking about these diseases or undergoing screenings for prostate cancer out of embarrassment or fear.

“Men often avoid these issues out of denial and not wanting to confront a disease that can cause significant side effects when treated,” he says.

Kelly, who often sports a moustache, says if talking about moustaches means more men will pay attention to their health, Movember will be worth it.

“We’re taught as a young child or a young man to tough it out when we’re hurting and take care of the women and children — to be the man in charge,” Kelly says. “But you can’t take care of others if you don’t take care of yourself. If more people know it’s OK to talk about these issues with their doctor and realize they need to take care of themselves, fewer people would die from these diseases.”
Genetic link to end-stage renal disease in lupus patients to be studied

UAB is the lead institution in a multi-site, federally fund-ed study of the genetic risk factors for end-stage renal disease (ESRD) in patients with lupus. A nearly $3.5 million Grand Opportunity grant from the National Institute of Arthritis, Musculoskeletal, and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), will create a national consortium to undertake what is known as a genome-wide association study.

End-stage renal disease is a costly complication of lupus, seen much more frequently in African-American patients than those of European descent. Scientists at UAB already have identified two genes thought to be factors in increased risk for ESRD, but believe that addi-tional genes are involved in the genetic susceptibility of African-Americans with lupus.

“Better understanding of these genetic risk factors may lead to strategies for ESRD intervention, reduce ethnic disparities in health outcomes and enable substantial cost savings in the health-care industry,” said Robert Kimberly, M.D., director of UAB’s Comprehensive Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Autonomy Center (CAMAC), professor in the Division of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology (CIR), and principal investigator.

Volunteers needed to examine testosterone replacement therapy

The UAB Division of Preventive Medicine is seek-ing volunteers for a national study to test the effects of testosterone as a treatment for several conditions affecting the health of older men. Low serum tes-tosterone may contribute to a number of problems experienced by older men, including decreased ability to walk, loss of muscle mass and strength, decreased vitality, decreased sexual function, impaired cognition, cardiovascular disease and anemia.

“If this treatment proves effective, we may be able to help older men with low testosterone remain healthy and independent longer than otherwise would have been possible,” said Cora Lewis, M.D., principal inves-tigator of the study. Funded primarily by the National Institute on Aging, the Testosterone Trial will be con ducted at 12 sites across the country.

Men in the Birmingham area who are interested in participating in the trial should call the UAB study center at 205-934-2294.

Network created to advance medicine in rheumatoid arthritis

UAB will lead the creation of a national database to enable researchers to identify predictors of treatment effectiveness for rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Many effective medications exist, but they vary greatly in cost and side-effects, and there is no way to predict which drug will work best on an individual.

Led by UAB with 10 participating sites, the Treatment Efficacy and Toxicity in Rheumatoid Arthritis Database and Repository (TETRAD) will create a large, sustainable database of treatment-response data and a repository of accompanying samples of DNA and blood cells from RA patients starting treatment with different drugs. S. Louis Bridges Jr., M.D., Ph.D., director of the UAB Division of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology, is principle investigator for TETRAD.

New drug combo shows promise with antiviral-resistant H1N1 ‘swine’ flu

An experimental drug cocktail that includes three prescriptions now widely available offers the best hope in developing a single agent to treat drug-resistant H1N1 swine flu, says a virology researcher in the UAB Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases.

In laboratory testing, the triple combination of oseltamivir (Tamiflu), amantadine (Symmetrel) and ribavirin showed a significant capacity to stop flu virus growth, says Mark Prichard, Ph.D. who serves on the board of directors of the International Society for Antiviral Research. The combo drug works better in the test tube than currently recommended single or double antiviral therapies used to treat both seasonal and swine flu strains, he says.

Prichard presented his data in September at the annual Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy held in San Francisco. The triple-combo testing is led by Adamas Pharmaceuticals, Inc. based in Emeryville, Ca.

Links to RA studied in African-Americans

UAB will lead a multi-site study of the first large-scale genetic analysis of African-American rheumatoid arthritis patients to explore evidence that variants differ by race and ethnicity.

“We also will be looking at genetic factors that affect damage of joints and osteoporosis in African-Americans with RA, as well as genetic factors that turn on or off expression of genes in blood cells from these subjects,” said S. Louis Bridges Jr., M.D., Ph.D., director of Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology and principal investigator for the five-year, $4.4 mil lion grant from the National Institute of Arthritis, Musculoskeletal, and Skin Diseases (NIAMS).

“We believe this work will provide advances in clinical rheumatology, improve diagnostic strategies and develop years of targeted therapies for RA in African-Americans.”

Researcher awarded $11.2 million to reduce child mortality in Zambia

UAB Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology Jeffrey Stringer, M.D., has been awarded a five-year, $11.2 million grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation African Health Initiative to design and implement a large-scale primary health care program to reduce child mortality in the sub-Saharan African nation of Zambia.

The project, “Clinical Mentoring and Community Engagement to Improve Health Outcomes,” will train health workers in three rural health districts in standard management protocols for common conditions and assure that each health center has the resources it needs to deliver quality care. Community health workers also will be engaged to ensure that patients remain in care and return for follow-up visits. Additionally, an electronic medical record will be developed to help measure how well service delivery meets standards of care and to identify areas that need improvement.

“We will focus on the major causes of child mortality, including pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria and malnutrition, plus improved adult HIV/AIDS care and pregnancy care, but our major emphasis will be on kids,” Stringer said. “We also will use these community health workers to distribute insecticide-treated bed nets for mosquitoes, to ensure all homes are sprayed for mosquitoes and to follow up on folks who don’t come for their appointments.” The ultimate goal, Stringer said, is saving lives. “Our primary aim is to reduce child mortality from its current rate of around 140 in 1,000 five births to less than 100 in 1,000,” he said.

CCTS forum to examine translational research in CF

Eric J. Sorscher, M.D., director of the Gregory Flem ing James Cystic Fibrosis Research Center, will discuss partnerships and clinical progress in cystic fibrosis translational science during the UAB Center for Clin ical and Translational Science forum from 11a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday, Nov. 13 in the Margaret Cameron Spain Auditorium. The monthly forums highlight accom plishments and opportunities in translational research. Lunch will be provided.

Aim research program requesting proposals

The UAB Center for Palliative Care Advanced Illness and Multimorbidity (AIM) research program is seek ing research proposals on advanced illness and multi morbidity research from postdoctoral trainees and full-time UAB faculty. More information and applica tions are online at www aging.uab.edu/aim. The deadline for applications is 5 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 25. Direct questions to Joyce Crump at jcrump@ uab.edu.

Learn more about these topics and other UAB research at www.uab.edu/news.
finding a cure for cancer can be a piece of cake.

November 9-15, restaurants all over Birmingham are helping to fight cancer by participating in “Sweet On A Cure.” Participants are designating one dessert from their menus and donating 100% of the proceeds from the sales to cancer research at the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center. Purchase your dessert today to see how sweet the battle against cancer can truly be.