SOM Curriculum: Patient, Doctor, and Society

The UAB School of Medicine class of 2011 begins its medical school journey in July 2007 with a 3-week introductory course “Patient, Doctor, and Society.” Instructors will highlight professionalism, ethics, the history of medicine, society’s expectations for physicians and will introduce evidence-based medicine, clinical care, research, and public health.

“We will raise students’ awareness about ethical concerns regarding patients and society. We will prepare medical students to conduct themselves professionally as physicians by respecting the collaborative roles of other health care professionals, by learning to treat patients and each other compassionately and respectfully, and by embracing the critical need for honesty and integrity in encounters with patients and colleagues.”

Independent and Small Group Studies

Possible student reading assignments include books such as As I Live and Breathe: Notes of a Patient-Doctor by Jamie Weismann, MD, the memoir of a woman with a rare congenital immune deficiency disease who decides to become a physician. “The reading assignments will serve as a basis for small-group discussions about the realities of practicing medicine in the 21st century,” Dr. Goepfert says. Small group sessions also will offer the opportunity for students to discuss, in a structured format, what they have learned in their large group classes. Students will write individual mission statements, and a class mission statement declaring what they hope to accomplish as medical students and in their professional development, and what type of physicians they want to become.

Students will begin collecting material for continued on page 2

UAB Health Center Montgomery 2007
S. Rexford Kennamer MD Lecture

UAB Health Center Montgomery recently hosted the annual S. Rexford Kennamer, MD, Distinguished Lecture. This year’s honoree was Benjamin S. Carson, MD, chief of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, who spoke on “Bioethics Today,” following an introduction by James M. Markert, MD, professor and director of UAB’s Division of Neurosurgery.

Dr. Carson, an internationally recognized neurosurgeon and popular author of several books, including Think Big and Big Hands, discussed challenges physicians will encounter as biomedical technology advances. Based on personal experiences and those he had while serving on President George W. Bush’s Panel on Bioethics, Dr. Carson outlined ongoing controversies related to stem cell research and other looming ethical issues.

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(L-R) SEABORN KENNAMER, DR. WICK MANY, DR. BEN CARSON, ISSABELLE KENNAMER DREHER, AND RICHARD M. KENNAMER
their learning portfolios such as essays, journal writing, and other assignments for reference and reflection during the new class. These activities will continue in the preclinical and clinical phases as the new curriculum places more emphasis on writing and reflection.

Longitudinal Themes

“As the curriculum becomes more integrated, we will increasingly focus on longitudinal themes embedded into each module that will enable students to relate these themes to the specific modular material they are studying,” says Assistant Professor of Medicine Thomas K. Hous-

ton, MD, MPH, who is in charge of the longitudinal themes and assessment components of the new curriculum. The longitudinal themes are based on needs assessment of UAB students and faculty and include a wide variety of concepts, including medical humanities, clinical skills, evidence-based medicine, and behavioral sciences.

Faculty Participation

“We are currently seeking clinical preceptors to lead small group afternoon sessions for the ‘Patient, Doctor, and Society’ module,” Dr. Goepfert says. Preceptors will function as facilitators for up to 10 students during the modules six 2-hour sessions. Each session will have specific goals and an outline for discussions.

Preceptors must participate in a short orientation session, prepare for sessions by reviewing outlines and reading assigned books and appendices, and complete a student assessment checklist. The course, scheduled for July 30 through August 17, culminates on August 19 with the white coat ceremony. For more information on the ‘Patient, Doctor, and Society’ module, contact Dr. Goepfert at 205.934.2216 or by e-mail at aliceq@uab.edu.

**Accolades**

Charles O. Elson III, MD, has been appointed to the Advisory Council of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), one of the National Institutes of Health. He will serve on the Digestive Diseases and Nutrition Subcommittee.

At UAB, Dr. Elson is vice chair for research in the Department of Medicine and the Basil I. Hirschowitz Chair in Gastroenterology. His research interests include the regulation of mucosal immune responses in the digestive tract. He is a recognized authority on the investigation and treatment of inflammatory bowel disease, colitis, and Crohn’s disease.

Dr. Elson will serve a 4-year appointment on the NIDDK Advisory Council, which typically undertakes broad issues of science policy. Members are drawn from the scientific and lay communities. The council provides second-level peer review of grant applications that have been scored by scientific review groups. It is a liaison between the research communities they represent and the NIDDK.

**In the News**

**UAB Leads National AIDS Research Outcomes Network**

UAB’s Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) will house the CFAR Network of Integrated Clinical Systems (C-NICS), a National Insti-

utes of Health-funded information sharing network to support outcomes research by electronically merging clinical data from seven CFARs across the country.

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute awarded UAB $2.45 million over 5 years to build and manage the network.

“This network is the first formal effort to track HIV/AIDS treatment outcomes on a broad comprehensive scale,” says C-NICS principal investigator Michael S. Saag, MD, an internationally known AIDS expert and director of UAB’s CFAR. C-NICS will garner more than 15,000 patients’ clinical data collected via electronic medical records at each site and combine these data with lifestyle and quality of life information from secure computerized questionnaires in waiting room kiosks. At each visit patients will assess symptoms, body image, mental health status, substance use, adherence to medication regimens, and other factors.

All data are collected using appropriate informed consent and privacy protections. To adhere to HIPAA standards, individual patient identification information is omitted. Clinical specimens also will be collected and stored for translational research projects. A finite resource, the specimens will be conservatively used and will be stored at their institution’s CFAR.

The C-NICS sites previously captured electronic data in their clinical practices. The C-NICS grant facilitates a collaborative, interactive information sharing network using a unified taxonomy nationwide, allowing the centers to pair pre-existing data with new data and to share that
data not only among CFARs but also with any interested investigator worldwide.

Dr. Saag and colleagues are developing rules and procedures to guide sharing and a Web site to access C-NICS data. The University of Washington will house the data.

These electronic medical records will allow physicians to alter treatment protocols as patterns of adverse effects, long-term complications, and treatment responses surface. Clinicians will be able to prescribe treatment regimens based on successful outcomes for each patient’s symptoms. Ultimately, Dr. Saag plans to incorporate decision-assist software to recognize patterns of success and suggest the best treatment regimen for a specific patient.

“This type network represents the future of HIV/AIDS clinical investigation," he says. “By heading this national effort, UAB is poised to emerge as leader in the rapidly advancing discipline of medical informatics.”

**SAAG APPOINTED DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

Edward Abraham, MD, chair of the Department of Medicine, has appointed Michael S. Saag, MD, director of the Division of Infectious Diseases effective April 12. Dr. Saag, an internationally known investigator who has been active in HIV/AIDS research and treatment for 25 years, will continue as director of the UAB Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) but will step down as director of the 1917 Clinic, which he founded in the early days of the AIDS epidemic.

Dr. Saag’s plans for the division, which has absorbed the Division of Geographic Medicine, include building on current strengths in sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, virology, vaccinology, international health, and mycology. “While nurturing and supporting our ongoing clinical care and education efforts, we will develop a larger cadre of basic science investigators,” Dr. Saag says. “With the proper alignment of resources, we aim to be a top five division in international health and infectious disease.”

Dr. Saag received his MD degree from the University of Louisville in 1981 and completed his residency in internal medicine, serving as chief resident, at UAB, as well as a fellowship in infectious diseases and molecular virology. During his fellowship, Dr. Saag made seminal discoveries in the genetic evolution of HIV in vivo. He established the 1917 Clinic, a comprehensive HIV outpatient clinic dedicated to providing patient care and conducting clinical trials, basic science research, and clinical outcomes research. From within the clinical structure, Dr. Saag bolstered UAB’s newly established CFAR with a clinical trials unit, a data management center, and a clinical specimen repository. The clinic became a vehicle for synergistic efforts among clinical, basic science, and behavioral science investigators and provides a dynamic interface for clinicians and patients.

Among a raft of groundbreaking articles, Dr. Saag published the first description of the use of viral load in clinical practice, the first guidelines for using viral load, and the first description of rapid dynamics of viral replication. He wrote the first proof of concept of fusion inhibition as a therapeutic option and directed the first inpatient studies of 8 of the 20 antiretroviral drugs currently on the market. He has contributed to more than 50 medical textbook chapters and coedited AIDS Therapy.

Dr. Saag continues to study HIV pathogenesis, including antiretroviral therapy and novel treatments for opportunistic infections. He is principal investigator on two major National Institutes of Health (NIH) awards: the UAB AIDS Center Program Project Award, for which he is director of the clinical core, and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases CFAR Network of Integrated Clinical Systems Award, an NIH-funded information sharing network to support outcomes research.

Dr. Saag serves on the NIH Office of AIDS Research Advisory Council and the US Department of Health and Human Services Guidelines Panel on Antiretroviral Therapy. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the American Board of Internal Medicine, the Infectious Disease Society of America, the HIV Medical Association, and the International AIDS Society-USA.

The AIDS Task Force of Alabama awarded Dr. Saag its Outstanding Medical Research

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**INFOBAHN**

**Surgeon General’s New Report On Secondhand Smoke**

US Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona, MD, has issued a comprehensive scientific report that concludes there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke at home or work increase their risk of developing heart disease by 25% to 30% and of lung cancer by 20% to 30%. The report, The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco: A Report of the Surgeon General and related materials are available at www.surgeongeneral.gov.

To access a Synopsis article, visit our Web site at [www.uabhealth.org/synopsis](http://www.uabhealth.org/synopsis).
Files are held in the Drop Box for up to 2 weeks.

**Rexford Kennamer Lecture**

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These might include, he noted, having the expertise to extend life span to 150 years, rationing health care based on factors unrelated to medical need, and genetically engineering intelligence, gender, and physical attributes.

His question to the audience of medical, business, and political leaders was: “Just because we have the technological capability, should we do it?” Using a model of “the best thing that could happen versus the worst thing that could happen,” Dr. Carson discussed mechanisms physicians and other health care professionals could use to explore these dilemmas.

Established in 1978, the Distinguished Lecture Series seeks to bring health care leaders to Montgomery to interact with the medical community. In 2000 Dr. S. Rexford Kennamer, a native of Montgomery and an esteemed cardiologist now living in California, established an endowment to ensure future generations would have the opportunity to gain knowledge through this series.

**SAAG ID Director**

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Achievement Award and the Medical Association of the State of Alabama honored him with its Excellence in Teaching Award. In 2003 the *Birmingham Business Journal* named him a “Health Care Hero,” and in 2005 the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce gave him the Spirit of Birmingham Award. The University of Alabama Medical Alumni Association recently selected Dr. Saag to receive the 2007 Hettie Butler Terry Community Service Award.