



# Scoop

Oct. 28, 2005

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

## Events to Know

### October

**31 REMINDER: Halloween Costume Contest.** 2 p.m., MSB Leather Lounge. Wear a costume for a chance to win a prize!

**31 Governor's Emerging Technology Fund** roundtable discussion for MS faculty. 3 p.m.-4:30 p.m., MSB B100.

**31 13th Annual Scholarship Golf Classic.** Timber Creek Golf Club, Friendswood. Visit <http://www.uthouston.edu/community/golf/index.html>.

**31 Literature and Medicine courses with Megan Cole begin.** Noon-1p.m., MSB 4.100. Courses run Oct. 31 to Nov. 16.

### November

**1 Faculty Honors Convocation.** 5 p.m., Hornberger Conference Center.

**1 President's Update** for all MS community. Attend one of two sessions: 7 a.m., MSB 3.001 or noon, MSB 2.135. Lunch provided.

**5 Heart Walk.** Visit <http://www.uthouston.edu/community/heartwalk/>.

**11 Thanksgiving Celebration.** 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Webber Plaza, Fannin Plaza, and MSB Leather Lounge.

## UTMost Interest

**Richard Smalling, M.D., Ph.D.**, Internal Medicine/Cardiology, gave presentations and participated in roundtable discussions at the recent Transcatheter Cardiovascular Therapeutics meeting from Oct. 16-21 in Washington, D.C. In addition, two of his fellows, **Blaithnead Murtagh, M.D.**, and **Gregory Giesler, M.D.**, had papers accepted for presentation at the meeting.

**Ayesha Mian, M.D.**, a resident under the mentorship of **Cynthia Santos, M.D.**, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, received a 2005 AACAP Presidential Scholar Award from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

## RAPINI RECEIVES WALTER R. NICKEL AWARD FROM ASDP

**Ronald Rapini, M.D.**, professor and chair of the Department of Dermatology, received the 2005 Walter R. Nickel Award for Excellence in Teaching of Dermatopathology from The American Society of Dermatopathology (ASDP). The award was presented Oct. 21 at the society's 42nd annual meeting in Seattle.

The award was established in 1997 in honor of Walter R. Nickel and recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions in the teaching of dermatopathology. Rapini has received multiple excellence in teaching awards from both The University of Texas Medical School at Houston and Texas Tech University, where his medical students and residents nominated him more than eight times to receive the "Outstanding Teacher of the Year" and "Mentor of the Year" awards.

"I'm grateful I was accepted for the award, and some of my former residents and students must have nominated me," Rapini said. "All too often, teaching is the hardest thing to measure in a medical school; and, at many medical schools, it's the last thing to be recognized. That's one of the main reasons I'm at the Medical School – because I like to teach."

Rapini has a dual appointment at M. D. Anderson Cancer Center as professor and chair of the Department of Dermatology and has worked to enhance relationships in education, training, and research between the Medical School and M. D. Anderson. In addition to his academic appointments, Rapini serves on the board of directors for the Zola Cooper Clinical and Dermatopathology Seminar and has been president and secretary-treasurer of ASDP.



Ronald Rapini

## PRACTICE PLAN POSTS POSITIVE END-OF-YEAR NUMBERS

The end-of-fiscal-year numbers are in, and the Medical School's practice plan posted a positive margin for the second year in a row. The practice plan, which includes the Medical Service, Research and Development Plan (MSRDP) and UT Physicians, ended fiscal year 2005 up \$300,000.

"We didn't make the amount of money we need to make in the practice plan, but for the last two years, it's been black not red ink," said **Dr. James Willerson**, president of the UT Health Science Center, to the MSRDP Board at its Oct. 11 meeting.

**Kevin Dillon**, health science center executive vice president for finance and administration, said this past fiscal year posed some challenges for the practice plan, including no physician liability insurance rebates, increased patient visits at the Harris County Hospital District, and an increase in unsponsored charity care – \$172.2 million, up from \$139 million in fiscal year 2004.

"We've had a 19 percent increase in total revenue compared to last fiscal year, and we've seen an improvement in our net collection rate – up 83.4 percent from 79.1 percent," Dillon said.

**Diana Browning**, assistant vice president for clinical affairs, reported that UT Imaging is on schedule to open in December for an open house and in January for business. The new 10,000

(Cont'd. on back)



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## Moyer, Portman Outline Differences of Health Panels

**Drs. Virginia Moyer and Ronald Portman** are two of the many faculty members at the Medical School who serve on advisory panels that make recommendations or guidelines for national health issues.

**Moyer**, professor of pediatrics, is a member of the **U.S. Preventive Services Task Force**. The purpose of the task force is “to provide guidance for individual clinical preventive services for Americans of all ages,” Moyer said.

Serving her third of a five-year appointment, Moyer said she believes she was nominated for the panel because of her interest in preventive services but being a pediatrician definitely helped. “I have had a long-standing interest in preventive services, particularly in screening tests and the appropriate use of screening tests,” she said.



Virginia Moyer

“There’s been a real effort on the task force to involve more people with pediatric expertise,” she added. “The American Academy of Pediatrics is one group that makes nominations to the task force. My involvement with the academy was probably the reason my name was known.”

**Portman**, professor of pediatrics and director of the Division of Pediatric Nephrology and Hypertension, serves on the **Cardiovascular and Renal Drugs Advisory Committee** of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The committee reviews and evaluates data concerning the safety and effectiveness of drugs for use in the treatment of cardiovascular and renal disorders and then makes recommendations to the Commissioner of Food and Drug Products.

Portman is serving his second of a five-year term. At the time he was elected, there were no pediatricians or nephrologists on the panel. “One person served two purposes,” he said. “The people who make the nominations are only going to pick the people they feel are really qualified. In my case being a pediatrician, a nephrologist, and from Texas was very helpful.”

Moyer’s panel is independent. “We don’t work for any government agency,” she said. “We are sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. We make our own decisions.”

The Cardiovascular and Renal Drugs Advisory Committee is one division of the FDA’s Center for Drug Evaluation Research (CDER). “We serve in a completely advisory capacity to this division of the FDA,” Portman said. “Our opinion is not binding but ignoring it is also not advisable, since all of the proceedings are public.”

Portman noted the committee’s meetings are tape-recorded and televised. “The public has every opportunity to ask questions or make comments about a particular issue,” he said.

The meetings of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force are also tape-recorded; however, they are not open to the public – only the results are publicized.

“We decide on the topics,” Moyer noted. “An announcement is made in the Federal Register that we are soliciting topics.” Professional organizations, advocacy groups, and federal agencies can submit topics.

Once a topic is chosen, the USPS Task Force gets to work. The process of making a recommendation begins with outlining the question at hand. Then, a complete evidence review is carried out by an Evidence-based Practice Center. The task force reviews the evidence carefully before making its recommendation.

“We do not make recommendations when there is not sufficient evidence,” Moyer noted. “The task force, based on the evidence, makes a decision about whether a preventive service should be strongly recommended, recommended, or recommended not to be done.”

In July, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force released a recommendation that more research needs to be done to better understand childhood obesity. “There wasn’t sufficient evidence to make a recommendation to screen for obesity in children,” Moyer said. “As important as this problem is, there simply is no evidence that screening for it makes it better.”

The CDER determines the topics and questions for the Cardiovascular and Renal Drugs Advisory Committee. The meetings begin with the pharmaceutical industry stating their case about the drug. The FDA’s response follows. Then, statements and opinions from lobbyists and the public are invited during a one-hour open forum. A one-to six-hour discussion ensues where the advisory committee reviews the aspects and questions before determining a recommendation.

In June, the panel endorsed a heart drug, BiDil, for black patients. Portman was one of two panelists who supported BiDil’s approval but opposed singling its use in one racial group. “If this drug works for African Americans, then it should be available for everyone to use,” Portman stated.

Both Moyer and Portman said they feel privileged to be members of their respective health panels. “This is more fun than any other panel I’ve ever been on because the people I work with on the task force are wonderful thinkers who are very careful in their assessment of the evidence,” Moyer said.

“I’ve never been involved with a group that’s as fascinating or educational as this FDA advisory committee,” Portman added.

-C. Webb



Ronald Portman



**Dr. Larry Gilstrap, Dr. Giuseppe Colasurdo, and Jorge Zambra (L-R) served root beer floats and popcorn at a combined SECC Kickoff Oct. 18 for the Departments of Pediatrics and Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Sciences.**

### MSRDP meeting, cont’d.

square-foot facility will be located on the 610 South Loop at Bellaire. She added that UT Physicians is implementing TOPP (Tactical Operations Performance Plan), a review of the revenue cycle and operations process, from scheduling to collections.

Drs. Willerson and **Michael McKinney**, senior executive vice president and chief operating officer, both thanked the Medical School’s faculty and staff for their participation in the Katrina outreach efforts.

“It was a good reminder of why we went to medical school in the first place. I’ll never be able to say thank you enough – you strengthened my faith in the profession,” McKinney said.

MSRDP is the “trust fund” for the university’s clinical services, and its board members are the Medical School’s department chairs and at-large members, who are elected by the faculty. UT Physicians is the business arm of the practice plan.

-D. Brown