

Events to Know

November

- 20 Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Seminar: Dr. Sudha Veeraraghavan** to present "Developmentally Important TEA Domain Transcription Factors: Structural Insights Into Activity." Noon – 1 p.m., MSB 2.135.
- 21 Cultural Humility in Medicine Blue Book Elective Series: treating Homeless Patients.** Noon – 1 p.m., MSB 2.006.
- 23-24 Thanksgiving Holidays, no Scoop**
- 29-Dec. 2 UT Student Scholarship Holiday Book Fair** at 3003 W. Holcombe Blvd. Barnes & Noble.
- 30 "A plague on these worms: modeling Yersinia pestis transmission with C. elegans" presented by Greg Darby, Ph.D.** (University of California, San Francisco). Noon – 1 p.m., MSB B.100
- 30 Ernst Knobil Distinguished Lecture. Nobel Laureate Dr. Stanley Prusiner** (University of California, San Francisco). 4 p.m., MSB 3.001.

NRC hosts 13th annual poster session

The Neuroscience Research Center will host its 13th annual poster session 10 a.m. – noon Saturday, Dec. 2 in the Leather Lounge of the Medical School. Faculty, students, residents, and postdoctoral fellows from any of the UT Health Science Center schools are invited to submit posters representing neuroscience research and to compete for the following awards:

Best poster by a graduate student, \$1,000; and best poster by a postdoctoral fellow, \$1,000.

Abstracts are due Monday, Nov. 20. Registration forms are available at <http://nba.uth.tmc.edu/nrc/> or by contacting Laura Ross, 713-500-5538, or laura.j.ross@uth.tmc.edu.

King takes on role of interim EVP, chief operating officer

For the last three weeks, Dr. Brent King, professor and chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine, has taken on a new role as appointed by President Dr. James Willerson -- interim executive vice president and chief operating officer of the UT Health Science Center.

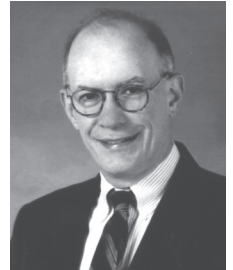
"I am very honored that Dr. Willerson has offered me this opportunity to serve UT Houston in a new way. It is a privilege to assist Dr. Willerson in continuing his vision of excellence for The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston," King said.

King started this new position effective Nov. 1, the date it was announced that Dr. Michael McKinney, senior executive vice president and chief operating officer, was named the sole finalist for chancellor of The Texas A&M University System by the Board of Regents.

"Dr. McKinney made great progress toward many worthy goals during his tenure, and my first priority is to see his work to its completion," Dr. King said. "Since our motto is 'Excellence Above All,' I hope to continue to find ways for us to demonstrate the meaning of those words."

King, a 1983 graduate of the Medical School and winner of the Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2000, first joined the faculty of the Medical School following his residency. He then left to work at the Medical College of Pennsylvania for seven years before returning as chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine – a position he has held for the last eight years.

"We congratulate Dr. King on his new appointment. His well demonstrated abilities at the Medical School assure me that he will be quite successful in his new role at the health science" *(Cont'd. on back)*



Dr. Brent King

Art for sale at Art Wall's silent auction exhibit

Art donated by featured artists from the Medical School's Art Wall will be on the auction block just in time for holiday shopping at the Art Wall's first silent auction exhibit Nov. 21-Dec. 1.

The art will be online available for preview at <http://med.uth.tmc.edu/administration/dean/art-wall/> and advance bidding will be available via e-mail at the site starting Monday, Nov. 27 and ending at midnight Thursday, Nov. 30. Live bidding will be held Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 at the Art Wall (located at the ground floor of the Medical School) until the auction's close at 12:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 1.

The winners will be announced live at the Art Wall at the close of the Meet the Artist reception at 1 p.m. Friday, Dec. 1. Art will be available for pick up at that time, and payment may be made with credit card, or check.

More than 20 pieces of art – ranging from photos to watercolors – have been generously donated by the artists who have displayed their art on the wall during the shows of the past year.

"We are so grateful to these artists who have supported our mission of beautifying the Medical School and are giving back to the Art Wall

by helping us raise funds through the silent auction event," said Lynne Arnett, chair of the art wall committee. "Without them, we wouldn't have an art wall."

All of the proceeds from the silent art wall event will go back to the art wall endowment, which will go toward improved lighting for the wall and funding for art wall openings.

The reception, which will be held from noon until 1 p.m. Dec. 1 also will feature the unveiling of the Dr. Regina Verani Art Wall donor plaque.

"The art wall has been very well received by our faculty, staff, and students and not only brightens our surroundings but broadens our horizons," said interim Dean Jerry Wolinsky.

-D. Brown



This and other art available at the auction.



Rheumatology team scores big with five grants

With five recent grants totaling nearly \$15 million, the Medical School's Division of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunogenetics is poised to become one of the nation's leaders in finding the genetic factors that contribute to the diagnosis and treatment of rheumatic diseases, including ankylosing spondylitis and scleroderma.

Dr. John Reveille, director of the Division of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunogenetics, said he is "gratified" to have such a successful team of investigators who is dedicated to searching for the root causes of chronic and degenerative diseases.

Reveille is more than a leader for his division; he is also a role model and received a five-year, \$5 million grant from the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to fund his study, "The Austro-Anglo-American Spondylitis Consortium" or "'Triple AAA' Spondylitis Consortium," otherwise known as "TASC."

"We know that over 90 percent of the cause of ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is genetic," said Reveille, who also holds the George S. Bruce, Jr. Professorship in Arthritis and Other Rheumatic Diseases. "It is frequently occurring as rheumatoid arthritis and is a significant cause of disability in chronic inflammatory back pain. It can result in severe spinal deformity."

Through four projects, Reveille hopes to elucidate the role of genetics in the pathogenesis of AS.

Another leader in the rheumatology division is Dr. Frank Arnett, the Elizabeth Bidgood Chair in Rheumatology and professor of internal medicine. Arnett received a \$7.5 million award from the NIH to establish a Center of Research Translation (CORT) in Scleroderma over five years from Sept. 1, 2006-Aug. 31, 2011.

Scleroderma, also known as systemic sclerosis, causes thickening and hardening of the skin and internal organs. It has a high mortality rate due to the fact there is no effective treatment or cure and that the disease may eventually spread to vital organs, such as the lungs.

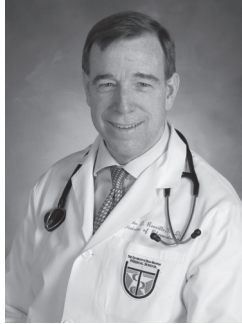
"The leading cause of death with scleroderma is respiratory failure," Arnett said, adding that the disease also may affect the kidney, heart, or gastrointestinal tract. "Each person is different by what's affected and what isn't."

Through the CORT in Scleroderma, Arnett wants to understand the cause of the disease, namely the genetic factors that contribute to its susceptibility and the ways a patient expresses the disease.

"The potential aim is to understand the molecular pathways that cause or contribute to this awful disease and by doing this, to find areas within those pathways that we can interrupt and produce new treatments or even preventative strategies," Arnett said.

Junior faculty member Dr. Shervin Assassi is well on his way to becoming a leader among the likes of his senior rheumatology investigators. Assassi, assistant professor of internal medicine, received an ACR REF Clinical Investigator Award for \$170,000 from the American College of Rheumatology Research and Education Foundation for his study, "Microarray Analysis of Peripheral Blood Cells in Systemic Sclerosis."

"This study will investigate the gene expression profiles of different types of systemic sclerosis patients in peripheral blood cells and compare these gene expression profiles with the profiles obtained from lupus and ankylosing spondylitis patients," Assassi said.



Dr. John Reveille

Embedded within Assassi's award is a training grant, which will allow him to obtain a master's degree in clinical research. Assassi's mentor is Dr. Filemon Tan, associate professor of internal medicine.

"I am very excited that the ACR REF has given Dr. Assassi the opportunity to develop into an independent translational researcher with this award," Tan said. "I am confident of his success with this research. The prospects for bringing and nurturing promising young investigators to study rheumatic diseases at UT are bright indeed."

Dr. Maureen Mayes, professor of internal medicine, is also a division champion who is committed to finding a cure for scleroderma. Her study, "Candidate Gene Polymorphisms in Scleroderma: Defining Genetic Susceptibility Factors," seeks to identify a set of genes that is associated with scleroderma disease susceptibility. The study was funded for \$625,000 over four years through Sept. 30, 2010, by the Department of Defense, Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program of the Office of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP).

Mayes will use blood and DNA samples from the Scleroderma Family Registry and DNA Repository – a research study of which she is the principal investigator – to obtain data for her new project.

"The overall goal of this project application is to identify gene polymorphisms that confer susceptibility to systemic sclerosis," Mayes said. "It is likely that several different pathways or sets of pathways are involved in producing the end-organ changes that are clinically diagnosed as systemic sclerosis."

Another rheumatology division champ is Dr. Xiaodong Zhou, associate professor of internal medicine. He received a sizable four-year grant for \$928,125, which is funded through Dec. 31, 2010, by the United States Army Medical Research and Materiel Command of the CDMRP.

His study, "The Integrative Studies of Genetic and Environmental Factors in Scleroderma," proposes that the cause and development of scleroderma could be related to both genetic and environmental factors.

"A common environmental particle, silica, has been strongly implicated to be capable of triggering scleroderma development in several epidemiological studies," Zhou said. "Military personnel are frequently exposed to silica and many other environmental particles. Whether such exposures are directly associated with development of scleroderma and/or scleroderma-like disorders (such as fibrosis) should be a concern."

Through his study, Zhou will combine genetic background and environmental triggers with the aim of revealing mechanisms that exist in the pathogenesis of scleroderma.

With close to \$15 million in awards to study ankylosing spondylitis and scleroderma, the Division of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunogenetics is well positioned to lead the fight against these potentially devastating diseases.

-C. Webb

King takes on role, cont'd.

center level and strengthen our institution's overall leadership," said interim Dean Jerry Wolinsky.

"I hope that my many friends and colleagues at UT Houston will continue to offer their opinions and guidance as I move into this new role," King added.

-D. Brown