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Keck School of Medicine of USC

Dean’s Photo Gallery

1. October 7. Philanthropist Deborah Lanni, center, president of the Lanni Family Charitable Foundation, held a reception at her home featuring talks by Stephen Grauer, right, M.D., Ph.D., and M.P.H., director of the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center, and Heinz-Josef Lenz, M.D., associate director for clinical research and co-leader of the Gastrointestinal Cancers Program at USC Norris. Lanni is a member of the Keck School of Medicine of USC Board of Overseers.

2. November 8. More than 70 physicians in the Las Vegas area gathered at the Paris Las Vegas Hotel to learn about cutting-edge diagnostic and treatment for urologic disease. From left, Tony Atienza, M.D., a Keck School alumni host, Dean Carmen A. Puliafito, M.D., M.B.A., and Jaswinder Grover, M.D. Other alumni hosts were Russ Gollard, M.D., and Bill Koch, M.D. The USC Institute of Urology presented the event in collaboration with the Office of Continuing Medical Education.

3. Business of Medicine Gift helps students prepare for practice of medicine

4. Research of the Future Grant helps further biomedical careers

Johns Hopkins surgeon recruited to lead Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery

An internationally renowned otoneurologic surgeon and researcher, John K. Niparko, M.D., joined the Keck School of Medicine of USC on Feb. 1 as professor and chair of the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery.

Niparko comes to USC from Johns Hopkins University, where he was professor and director of the division of otology, neurotology and skull base surgery, as well as medical director of the division of audiology. From 2009 to 2012, he served as interim director of the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at Johns Hopkins, which since 1998 has been ranked No. 1 in ear, nose and throat care in the nation by U.S. News & World Report.

Niparko succeeds Dale Ruef, M.D., who stepped down from the position of department chair after 30 years of service.

“Dr. Niparko is a preeminent physician-scientist on the cutting edge of disorders of the ear, and we are excited to have him lead our faculty, residents and students into the next generation of health care,” said Carmen A. Puliafito, M.D., M.B.A., dean of the Keck School.

Continued on page 2

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Continued on page 2

Page 4 Visit the Keck School website at keck.usc.edu

Professor Emeritus Shaul Massry, left with Keck School Dean Carmen A. Puliafito.

New otolaryngology chair John K. Niparko talks with one of his young cochlear implant patients.
Technology restores hearing, expands patient horizons

For the right candidates, the cochlear implant is “an amazing technology” that not only allows a person to hear, but also opens up unlimited life options, according to John K. Niparko, M.D., new chair of the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at the Keck School of Medicine. “The sense of hearing is critical to developing insights to the spoken language, insights which are applied to reading, writing and other cognitive skills,” said Niparko, who is author of the widely used textbook Cochlear Implants: Principles and Practice. “Having access to sound has an important bearing on how cognitive and social skills come together.”

Niparko brings with him to USC a National Institutes of Health-funded study that examines the effects of cochlear implantation on language, behavioral, and social skills in children. The study involves 63 investigators from six university-based clinical sites and two data coordination centers. Children enrolled in 2001-2002 have now been followed for more than 10 years. Children using only sign language face a major disability, Niparko said, but those who receive cochlear implants “can look forward to having a mainstream experience. The technology expands their horizons substantially.”

A cochlear implant is a small, complex electronic device. An external microphone that sits behind the ear picks up sound from the environment. The internal components process speech, convert signals into electric impulses and send the impulses to the auditory nerve. Cochlear implants can often help adults who have lost their hearing. The adults learn to associate the signals provided by the implant with sounds they remember. Therapy following implantation surgery is especially important for children to learn to attach meaning to the sounds they’re hearing, Niparko said. Another important part of the therapy is training the parents how to help expand their child’s language skills.

For the congenitally deaf child, early placement of the cochlear implant is important—as young as 8-9 months of age. “They need sound in the first year to stay on schedule with listening and speaking,” Niparko said, but those who receive cochlear implants “can look forward to having a mainstream experience. The technology expands their horizons substantially.”

Niparko is a leading authority on implantable devices that improve hearing for the profoundly deaf and severely hard of hearing. Under his leadership, The Listening Center Cochlear Implant Program at Johns Hopkins has garnered an international reputation for its clinical excellence and for its groundbreaking research and participation in clinical trials of new generations of implantable devices. He has received numerous awards, including the Distinguished Service Award from the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. He is a past president of the American Otological Society and currently serves on the council of the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders of the National Institutes of Health. He is on the boards of the River School in Washington, D.C., an inclusive educational model for children with hearing loss, and The Hearing and Speech Agency of Baltimore, which administers services for hearing impaired and autistic children. At the Johns Hopkins Schools of Medicine and Public Health, Niparko also served as an associate faculty member at the Welch Center for Prevention, Epidemiology and Clinical Research. In 2001, he became the first holder of the George T. Nager Professorship in Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. Prior to joining Johns Hopkins in 1991, Niparko was associate professor at the University of Michigan Hospitals and the chief of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Ann Arbor, Mich.

USC Norris cancer research among year's top advances

USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center research that identifies specific genes that must be turned off in order for cancer cells to survive was named one of the top 20 major advances in cancer research for 2012 by the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO).

The study first appeared in the May 3 issue of Cancer Cell, a peer-reviewed scientific journal. It is one of the studies highlighted in "Clinical Cancer Advances 2012: ASCO’s Annual Report on Progress Against Cancer."

The study examined the effects of DNA methylation on the expression of the genes that promote cancer cell growth. DNA methylation, or the addition of methyl groups to a gene, can change gene expression without changing the DNA sequence. This epigenetic process is potentially reversible, providing good targets for new treatments.

"Our findings essentially pave the way for more effective cancer medicine," said the study’s first author, Daniel D. De Carvalho, Ph.D., a former USC postdoctoral fellow who now leads a lab at the Ontario Cancer Institute at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre in Toronto.

Seven co-authors are from the Keck School. The study was supported by grant R21CA113064 from the National Institutes of Health’s National Cancer Institute.

$125,000 gift helps bring the business of medicine to Keck School students

The gift established the Nagelberg Business of Medicine Fund to support the development of a core business of medicine curriculum. The funds will help underwrite a faculty stipend, curriculum development and administrative costs associated with creating and offering the program. The hope is that this new curriculum will provide a solid foundation in the fundamentals of business and the practice of medicine. The Nagelbergs’ daughter, Jodi, a second-year medical student at the Keck School, will experience first-hand the business of medicine.

The business of medicine is a familiar topic for Nagelberg, a spine surgeon who received his Executive M.B.A. degree from USC in 2009. “To succeed in the changing health care environment, today’s leaders in medicine must blend the business savvy of a CEO with the knowledge and compassion of a top-notch care givers,” he said. “Without education in health policy and the health care system, physicians are missing critical tools in their professional toolbox.”

For more information on the Keck Medicine Initiative and ways to get involved, please call Melany Duval, senior associate dean for development, 323-442-1531, or email melandydu@usc.edu.
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The USC Cochlear Implant Program at Johns Hopkins has garnered an international reputation for its clinical excellence and for its groundbreaking research and participation in clinical trials of new generations of implantable devices. He has received numerous awards, including the Distinguished Service Award from the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. Niparko is a past president of the American Otological Society and currently serves on the council of the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders of the National Institutes of Health. He is on the boards of the River School in Washington, D.C., an inclusive educational model for children with hearing loss, and The Hearing and Speech Agency of Baltimore, which administers services for hearing impaired and autistic children.

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As part of the development process, Michael E. Porter, M.B.A., Ph.D., the Bishop William Lawrence University Professor at the Harvard Business School, met with students and faculty at the Health Sciences campus on Oct. 11 to discuss value-based health care delivery. Porter has experience developing business of medicine curricula for universities, medical schools and professional education programs for health professionals.

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The Meira and Shaul G. Massry Foundation is best known for the prize in medicine that it offers to noted scientists—10 of the 31 Massry Prize winners have gone on to win Nobel Prizes. Now, students at the Keck School of Medicine of USC can further their scientific careers thanks to a recent $100,000 grant from the Massry Foundation to the Dean’s Fifth-Year Research Scholars program.

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