Mission

Serving women

Advancing research and patient care to make lives better
First president was innovator

The UT Health Science Center community, Texas and the nation lost a pioneer with the passing of Frank Harrison, M.D., Ph.D., on Aug. 9. He was 99. As the first president of the Health Science Center, Dr. Harrison paved the foundation for a strong faculty and administration and positioned the university as a model of excellence in education and research.

Soon after The University of Texas System Board of Regents named Dr. Harrison as president on Nov. 4, 1973, he named deans for the School of Medicine and Dental School of the Health Science Center and established the institution’s Executive Committee. During the 1970s, a $3 million laboratory animal resources area was completed as part of a $15 million School of Medicine expansion project and the Board of Regents authorized plans for a $9.5 million library building.

The School of Nursing and Dental School buildings were constructed and dedicated. Dr. Harrison oversaw the transfer of the School of Nursing from the UT System into the Health Science Center and established the institution’s Executive Committee. During the 1970s, a $3 million laboratory animal resources area was completed as part of a $15 million School of Medicine expansion project and the Board of Regents authorized plans for a $9.5 million library building.

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By September 1984, upon Dr. Harrison’s retirement, the Health Science Center enrolled more than 2,300 students, employed more than 3,000 faculty and staff, and conducted sponsored research of $32 million.

Prior to his presidency at the Health Science Center, Dr. Harrison pursued a long and distinguished career of service within the UT System, notably at UT Southwestern, where he was associate dean of graduate studies. In 1966, UT System Chancellor Harry Ransom asked Dr. Harrison to launch the graduate program at UT Arlington. Within two years, Dr. Harrison had established six graduate departments approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Named president in Arlington in 1968, he fostered an atmosphere of collaboration and openness while demonstrating the desirable ability to run a tight ship. He was a detailed and skilled administrator who worked behind the scenes in advance of official actions to ensure their success. Dr. Harrison was born on Nov. 21, 1913. The son of a Dallas neurologist, he earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Southern Methodist University and studied for two years at The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. He earned his master’s degree and Ph.D. at Northwestern University. UT Health Science Center President William L. Henrich, M.D., MACP, said Dr. Harrison’s legacy of innovation and collaboration in education and research helped mold the university into the success it is today. “Dr. Harrison will be remembered and appreciated for generations to come,” Dr. Henrich said.
Women’s wellness: VIP access for all

Each of us can name a woman close to us who is the light of our life. She could be our mother, sister, aunt, teacher or friend. The light of my life is my wife, Mary. Her example of selflessness, kindness and courage serve as a compass for me. During this last year, she literally saved my life on several occasions. I will forever be grateful to her.

But what if the tables had been turned? What if it had been Mary who had fallen ill a year ago instead of me? Disease does not discriminate. Just as we all want the best care for our loved ones, I want only the best care for my family when they need it.

Every day I am reminded of how proud I am to continue leading the UT Health Science Center. Our institution is among the best in the nation in providing excellent and compassionate health care for those near and dear to us and for everyone.

This issue of Mission focuses on what we offer specifically in the domain of care and wellness for women. The clinical care and education we provide is backed by a multidisciplinary approach linked to evidence-based outcomes. Our faculty researchers and clinicians in all schools and departments collaborate to bring the very best to our students, patients and to our local and global community who come from all walks of life.

Jovita De Leon (pictured on the cover) is just one example. She had no insurance and a language barrier when her cancer occurred. Because of superb care, she has the prospects for a rich and ful life.

One way we ensure this quality continues is to prepare the next generation of men and women scientists through pipeline programs such as The Max and Minnie Tomerlin Voelcker Biomedical Research Academy. These bright young students may someday lead Nobel-laureate discovery and thereby save millions of lives. The generosity of the Voelcker Fund and others highlighted in this issue make our mission possible.

Thank you for taking the time to partner with us in these endeavors that make our exceptional health care, education, research and community service accessible to our loved ones and to everyone.

Sincerely,

William L. Henrich, M.D., MACP
President
Professor of Medicine
UT Health Science Center at San Antonio
Faculty members respond to disaster in West

One of the first to hear about the fertilizer plant explosion in West, Texas, was Emily Kidd, M.D. The emergency physician and assistant professor at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio arrived in the northeast Texas town within a few hours, at midnight on Wednesday, April 17. She found that emergency medical responders had already transported the most severely injured patients to area hospitals. While she did not treat patients, her work was far from over.

Dr. Kidd wears several hats due to her assignments in the Department of Emergency Health Sciences (EHS), part of the School of Health Professions, and the Department of Emergency Medicine (EM) in the School of Medicine. Because the EHS department has a contract to provide paramedic training for the San Antonio Fire Department, Dr. Kidd serves as its interim medical director. This role also places her in regional and state leadership positions in emergency planning and response.

After deploying to West, Dr. Kidd worked in the state medical operations center in Austin, where she helped deploy disaster resources to West, including a Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) – a hospital emergency room on wheels. She returned to West as medical director for the state’s Emergency Medical Task Force to assess medical needs until the state medical resources were no longer needed.

Dr. Kidd pointed out that Dr. Burgbacher received an invaluable contract to participate in real crisis simulation training. “In addition to treating patients, he was able to actively participate in planning and deploying in a complex multiagency response to a live disaster,” he said. “This is something that few programs in the country are able to provide and that few emergency medicine residents are able to participate in.”

Methodist Healthcare Ministries funds new emergency medicine residency program

Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas Inc., has partnered with the University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio to support the university’s inaugural emergency medicine residency program.

A four-year, $8.3 million grant from Methodist Healthcare Ministries, awarded this summer as the first 10 residents started their orientation in the Department of Emergency Medicine in the School of Medicine. They are expected to graduate in the summer of 2016.

The University of Texas Health Science Center (UT Health Science Center) is partnering with the UT Health Science Center of Houston to train an inaugural class of 120 flight medics in San Antonio.

“The Army conducted a data analysis over the past 12 years on battlefield injuries. It showed there was a training gap in the care offered before we got injured soldiers to our surgical hospitals,” explained Lt. Col. Brian Krakauer, M.D., an Army emergency medicine physician.

“Studies show that 80 percent of graduates from an emergency medicine program are not projected to meet minimum workforce standards in our region until 2037, which is why the new civilian emergency medicine residency is crucial,” Dr. Heinrich said.

“We are excited to team up with the Health Science Center in this long-range project that will help to alleviate the grave shortage of emergency medicine physicians throughout South Texas,” Heinrich said. “By working together, we can help save lives.”

San Antonio has the country’s second lowest number of board-certified emergency physicians with 5.5 physicians per 100,000 residents. Rural hospitals in this area are especially underserved with only 2.3 emergency physicians per 100,000 residents.

“We need to keep our emergency physicians in San Antonio to care for San Antonio. These physicians will attain exceptional knowledge, procedural ability and superb critical judgment,” Dr. Heinrich said.

Methodist Healthcare Ministries and UT Health Science Center alumna Jorge A. Alvarez, M.D., and his wife, Rebecca, are avid runners. They enjoy the spirit and excitement of participating in various runs and marathons. Occasionally Dr. Alvarez volunteers in a medical tent where he treats patients and routine injuries and exhaustion while running and covers for paramedics.

“Getting significantly injured into a medical aid station at 5:00 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon, Dr. Alvarez was stationed as a medical volunteer near the finish line and proudly greeted his wife when she crossed. Twenty minutes later, their celebration turned to turmoil when a thunderous boom echoed nearby. Two bombs detonated near the finish line and Alvarez was not hit, but rushed toward the scene – a ubiquitous frog of smoke and confusion. Blood and the wounded scattered about. He immediately tended to the gravely injured while others hurried to offer help,” Dr. Alvarez said. “I used anything I could find – hoses, tubes and my belt – as tourniquets.”

Authorities quickly cleared and secured the area. Dr. Alvarez was among the last to leave the scene as he helped move the wounded to a safe location nearby where he continued to attend to their injuries and waited for emergency responders to transport them to hospitals.

“I instinctively, Dr. Alvarez, who was not hurt, rushed toward the scene – a ubiquitous frog of smoke and confusion. Blood and the wounded scattered about. He immediately tended to the gravely injured while others hurried to offer help,” Dr. Alvarez told the San Antonio Express-News.

“Emergency Health Sciences receives $8.3 million to train flight medics

May 12, 2010, is a day Army Sgt. Eric Emmons will never forget. One of his brothers-in-law died after stepping on an explosive device while their unit was on route for clearance operations in Afghanistan.

“His death instantly, thankful I did not have to suffer. But from that point forward, I knew I would need to further my medical knowledge to ensure I could do everything possible for wounded soldiers in the future,” said Sgt. Emmons, the unit’s medic.

Now a flight medic, Sgt. Emmons volunteered for the new U.S. Army Critical Care Flight Paramedic Program offered through the Department of Emergency Health Sciences (EHS), part of the School of Health Professions.

“The Army conducted a data analysis over the past 12 years on battlefield injuries. It showed there was a training gap in the care offered before we got injured soldiers to our surgical hospitals,” explained Lt. Col. Brian Krakauer, M.D., an Army emergency medicine physician.

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San Antonio cardiology and emergency health sciences

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DoD, VA approve $45 million in quest for PTSD cure

In an unprecedented show of support for our nation’s wounded warriors, the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will provide approximately $45 million over five years for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) research to advance diagnosis, prevention and treatment for service members and veterans. The UT Health Science Center San Antonio and the VA National Center for PTSD will lead the consortium.

The STRONG STAR (South Texas Research Organizational Network Guiding Studies on Trauma and Resilience) will provide an array of cutting-edge clinical treatment trials and biological studies for active military and veterans with PTSD and related conditions, said Consortium Director Alan L. Peterson, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry in the School of Medicine at the Health Science Center. Initiatives will include efforts to learn more about the biology/physiology of PTSD development and treatment response to inform diagnosis, prediction of disease outcome, and new or improved treatment methods.

“Historically, PTSD has been considered to be a chronic, lifelong disorder that is difficult to treat, particularly in military combat veterans,” Dr. Peterson said. “However, results of studies of PTSD in civilian populations demonstrate that a large percentage of patients have developed PTSD at some point, treatment advances could help millions more Americans. STRONG STAR (South Texas Research Organizational Network Guiding Studies on Trauma and Resilience) was initially funded in 2008 by the Department of Defense’s Office of Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP), part of the U.S. Army’s Medical Research and Materiel Command. For STRONG STAR-CAP, the original STRONG STAR consortium has partnered with the seven divisions of the National Center for PTSD and other VA, military and civilian investigators and institutions across the world to form the largest research consortium in history dedicated to the alleviation of combat-related PTSD.

For more information, visit strongstar.org.

An estimated 250,000 service members could be diagnosed with PTSD. Additionally, because an estimated 7 percent of the civilian population will develop PTSD at some point, treatment advances could help millions more Americans.

22nd Annual San Antonio Express-News Book & Author Luncheon is Nov. 12

Don’t miss the 22nd annual San Antonio Express-News Book & Author Luncheon set for Tuesday, Nov. 12, at the Marriott Rivercenter, 101 Bowie Street, in San Antonio. Book sales open at 9 a.m. with the luncheon at 11:30 a.m. Six prominent authors will entertain the audiences with tales from their best-selling books. Guests have the opportunity to purchase and have the books autographed by each featured author.

Since its establishment in 1991, the event has raised more than $2.9 million for the Phase I Clinical Research Program at the Cancer Therapy & Research Center at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio. For more information and to make reservations, visit MakeLivesBetter.uthscsa.edu/BookAuthor or call 210-567-2509.

What if that special woman in your life – your mother, grandmother, sister or friend – was sick? What if she needed a doctor, medication or a medical procedure to make her better?

Today, women make up almost half of the U.S. labor force. About 40 percent of all households with children under 18 include mothers who are either the sole or primary source of income for the family. Single moms account for 8.6 million of those. And, grandmothers are more often becoming primary caregivers for the 1 in 10 children who live with a grandparent.

At The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, researchers and physicians understand the profound impact women have on our lives and society. That’s why women’s health care is a top priority.

The following pages illustrate just a few examples of how Health Science Center researchers, such as Leslie Myatt, Ph.D. (pictured left), and clinicians, like Ildiko Agoston, M.D. (right), are collaborating and leading efforts to enhance the care and services provided to women of all ages and backgrounds in San Antonio and South Texas.

Source: Pew Research Center

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For more information, visit strongstar.org.

Source: Pew Research Center
Experience, collaboration and support fuel new center

Center for Excellence in Women’s Health launched

By Natalie Gutierrez

"WOMEN ARE AT THE CORE OF OUR LIVES AND WORLD," said Leslie Myatt, Ph.D.

For nearly 40 years, Dr. Myatt has dedicated his life to reproductive science and women's health care. He focuses on applying basic bench research to clinical problems and translating his findings into better ways to diagnose and prevent diseases and disorders that plague women.

His passion stems partly from observing many of the strong women in his life. He describes his mother, aunts and two grandmothers as being determined and influential, yet sensitive and supportive of their spouses and family. As a young boy growing up in Yorkshire, England, Dr. Myatt remembers helping his family care for his paternal grandmother when she was diagnosed with diabetes, and his maternal grandmother during her final days battling bladder cancer.

Today, Dr. Myatt sees the same determination and support from his wife, Angela Elizabeth Myatt, with whom he has two children, George, 25, and Louise, 20. Angela earned her Master of Science in Women’s Health at the Health Science Center after serving as a faculty member for 22 years at the University of Cincinnati where he directed the National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded Physician Scientist Training Program and the Women’s Reproductive Health Research Scholars Program.

"Pregnancy is where life begins for the child and is a critical time in the life of the mother," Dr. Myatt said. "It’s like a mapping system or computer programming, determining the future course of health for both the mother and child."

Dr. Myatt likened pregnancy to a "stress test" for the mother. "If a woman fails the stress test because she develops gestational diabetes or hypertension, that means she needs careful and regular follow up during and after she gives birth and, importantly, throughout the rest of her life." Failure of the stress test, Dr. Myatt said, could be the signal for a host of other disorders that the mother and child could develop in the future, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders, cancer, diabetes or psychiatric or mood disorders.

Dr. Myatt and his research team study how genes interact with environmental factors such as pollutants, lifestyle, diet, stress, and disease during pregnancy, and affect the mother and child. They also study how the placenta regulates fetal growth and development as it supplies nutrients to the fetus. When the placenta is compromised by the environment inside or outside the womb, preterm birth can also occur. Dr. Myatt said that children born prematurely face serious and sometimes lifelong health problems.

Because of the placenta’s complex role in birth and life, some cultures have established traditions to honor the organ. The “Tree of Life” (pictured above) involves the practice of incorporating the placenta in artwork that is either displayed in the home or preserved as a keepsake.

ENDOWMENT OPENS WINDOW

This year, Dr. Myatt was named the holder of the Quincy and Estine Lee Endowment, funded by a gift from the Estate of Estine M. Lee and a matching gift from Francisco Gonzalez-Scarano, M.D., dean of the School of Medicine and vice president for medical affairs. Dr. Myatt also was named the director of the newly created Center for Excellence in Women’s Health at the Health Science Center.

"The generosity of the Estine M. Lee Estate and the decision to create the center shows a strong commitment by this institution and the community to women’s health. It opened a window of opportunity for us to excel in this area," Dr. Myatt said. "Women comprise 50 percent of the patients we see throughout our Health Science Center and UT Medicine clinics. Dr. Myatt explained that the national decline
in federal funding for research and education that began several years ago triggered the closing of many centers for women's health across the country, including the closing in 2007 of the center that had been established at the Health Science Center.

“It is time to rejuvenate and expand our efforts and attract additional funding,” Dr. Myatt said. “A new dynamic center in women's health here on our campus will re-establish us as having the only center of this kind in Texas.”

CONNECTING AND COLLABORATING

The new Center for Excellence in Women's Health will be a multidisciplinary, coordinated effort by multiple departments and community partners to connect, consolidate and advance all aspects and efforts of women's health care, research, education, leadership and community service the Health Science Center offers.

A large portion of research conducted across the various schools concentrates on women's health. Obvious areas include perinatology and gynecology. Dr. Myatt said the center will work to identify and emphasize additional research opportunities in areas that may not be so obvious but that affect large number of women. Obesity, diabetes, depression, cardiovascular disease and cancer are some of those.

“Furthermore, San Antonio is notable for its predominantly Hispanic population and significant military presence. These present unique opportunities for us to bring researchers together to strengthen existing programs and develop new discoveries that benefit these groups,” Dr. Myatt said.

Health care partners such as University Health System, the South Texas Veterans Health Care System and the network of researchers across the nation, who are connected by the university's Clinical Translational Science Award, will make valuable contributions. An advisory board, including community leaders, will help guide the center’s efforts.

UMBRELLA FOR GROWTH

UT Medicine San Antonio, the clinical practice of the School of Medicine at the Health Science Center, offers comprehensive care for women of all ages. Most recently, UT Medicine created the Women's Comprehensive Health Institute at its Medical Arts & Research Center (MARC). The institute serves as a one-stop destination where women can achieve annual health care assessments in one place on one single day.

Dr. Myatt said that under the umbrella of the Center for Excellence in Women's Health, the new institute and other clinical programs will benefit from access to new community outreach efforts such as health fairs that invite women to participate in clinical and research programs offered by the university.

Women's health research seminars and annual symposiums are also planned. “All of these programs working together enhance our research and clinical enterprises,” Dr. Myatt said. Through curriculum expansion and career development, fellowship and mentoring programs, Dr. Myatt said the center will also focus on increasing the number of female faculty, students and fellows participating in women's health activities and increase the number of women faculty at the university overall. He said grant applications for funding support are underway.

PHILANTHROPY CRUCIAL TO SUCCESS

Because the NIH and other state and federal funding sources have remained relatively flat for the past few years, Dr. Myatt said funding from private donors and foundations is crucial to the success of the center.

“The generosity of donors like the Estine M. Lee Estate has given us the start. Now we hope the community will join with us to continue our momentum,” he said.

One group that will help advocate for the center is the Council for Excellence in Women's Health. Mary Henrich, wife of Health Science Center President William L. Henrich, M.D., co-chairs the council with Graciela Cigarroa, wife of Francisco G. Cigarroa, M.D., chancellor of The University of Texas System. They lead a group of more than 100 influential women community leaders from San Antonio and South Texas who volunteer and serve on the council.

The goal of the council, which was formed in 2007, is to improve the physical and mental health of women in San Antonio by building awareness for women's health issues. Through various outreach activities, they promote a greater understanding and need for support of women's health care programs and initiatives.

Since its establishment, the council has raised $84,000 (including matching funds from the President’s Council), and has provided more than 32 scholarships to students enrolled in the five schools at the Health Science Center.

“I am excited and honored to be able to work with so many talented individuals at the university and partners in our community toward elevating women's health care, research, education and outreach in this city,” Dr. Myatt said.

“The Center for Excellence in Women's Health is an opportunity that everyone can and should be a part of, and one for which everyone will greatly benefit in the long run.”

For more information, visit uthscsa.edu/op/womenscouncil/index.asp

“For over 30 years my mother and grandmother have worked for women's health care. The Council for Excellence in Women's Health offers an opportunity for women to connect, consolidate and advance all aspects of women's health care across the university. The generosity of donors like the Estine M. Lee Estate has given us the start. Now we hope the community will join with us to continue our momentum.”

– Mary Henrich, co-chair, Council for Excellence in Women’s Health

Join today.

• Learn about women’s programs and initiatives offered at the UT Health Science Center;
• Serve as a sounding board and act as “eyes and ears” in the community to help the Health Science Center fulfill its mission for excellence in women’s health;
• Enlist other community leaders to serve as volunteers in support of the university’s women’s initiatives; and
• Participate in Women’s Leadership Committee meetings and other events.

For more information to join the Council for Excellence in Women’s Health, call Kim Warshauer at 210-567-0242 or warshauer@uthscsa.edu, or visit uthscsa.edu/op/womenscouncil/index.asp

See related story on the Women’s Comprehensive Health Institute of UT Medicine San Antonio, page 14.
Ildiko Agoston, M.D., FACC, assistant professor of medicine at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, has created what she calls a VIP clinic for the everyday woman without the VIP price tag.

Since arriving at the university in 2011, Dr. Agoston and her team created the Women’s Comprehensive Health Institute. The institute, which opened last June, offers a comprehensive, multidisciplinary clinic that addresses the complex and unique health care needs of women of all ages.

**ANNUAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS DONE ALL IN ONE PLACE**

“This truly is a one-stop shop for women. Instead of taking five days to go to five different doctor’s offices, they can have all their annual health care assessments done in one place on one single day,” she said. “We have all the specialists in one place. Women love the convenience and the time-saving process.”

Based on a woman’s age and insurance benefits, the annual appointment can include a physical exam, dermatology exam, gynecology exam with Pap smear, mammogram, electrocardiogram, bone density scan and other health screenings.

“To begin coming to our women’s institute, a woman calls our office and talks to a registered nurse who answers questions about our services and provides a health questionnaire. We review the completed questionnaire and decide – based on the current evidence-based health guidelines – what the woman needs,” Dr. Agoston said.

The registered nurse works with the patient to schedule the appointments and confirm insurance benefits. The patient is given an itinerary for the day.

**INSTANTANEOUS ACCESS TO MEDICAL RECORDS**

“The women have loved it. There is no clinic like this in the city. The concept is to make it more convenient for our patients to take care of themselves.”

— Ildiko Agoston, M.D., FACC

“Call the institute at 210-450-6400.”

When a woman has the sort of problem that’s usually not discussed, she can find deep knowledge and a sympathetic ear in Elizabeth Casiano, M.D.

A fellowship-trained urogynecologist with UT Medicine San Antonio, Dr. Casiano has extensive training and experience treating conditions that affect female pelvic organs and the muscles and connective tissues supporting them. These conditions include urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse, when one or more pelvic organs slip downward from their normal position.

“A woman might be embarrassed to tell anyone – even her physician – that she’s having such a problem. Still more common, Dr. Casiano said, is seeing women who have waited years to be evaluated because they thought their difficulties were a normal part of aging.

“They think it’s something they have to live with as they get older,” said Dr. Casiano, a clinical assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology in the School of Medicine of the UT Health Science Center. “A lot of older patients have stopped doing things because this is interfering. They really want to get back to their activities, the things they used to enjoy.”

Women should not feel alone in having these problems. Up to 40 percent of women will have enough symptoms of urinary incontinence or pelvic organ prolapse to merit medical evaluation and treatment, which usually brings significant relief.

The specialty was a natural fit for Dr. Casiano, who arrived in San Antonio as a child due to her father’s military service. He is also a gynecologist, and by the time she attended Incarnate Word High School, she knew that she wanted to be a physician, too. “I always give my dad credit for that because I used to go around with him on the weekends,” Dr. Casiano said. “He loved his job, and I was inspired by that.”

She went to Brown University, where she completed an eight-year combined program in liberal medical education. She received a bachelor’s degree in political science in 2000 and her medical degree in 2004.

From there, Dr. Casiano went to The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center for residency and the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., for a fellowship in female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery. She joined UT Medicine in 2011 and is one of two fellowship-trained urogynecologists in San Antonio.

“We are thrilled to have Dr. Casiano on our faculty and seeing patients of UT Medicine,” said Mark Funk, M.D., medical director of the UT Medicine obstetrics and gynecology clinic, located at the Medical Arts & Research Center (MARC). “The expertise she brings for the care of women with the most complicated pelvic organ prolapse and urinary problems is extraordinary. She is able to greatly improve the lives of women suffering from symptoms of these pelvic conditions.”

**Women’s liberation**

**Doctor relieves disconcerting disorders**

By Sheila Hotchkin

“I always give my dad credit for that because I used to go around with him on the weekends.”

— Ildiko Agoston, M.D., FACC

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Call the institute at 210-450-6400.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Casiano or other UT Medicine obstetricians or gynecologists, call 210-450-9500.
It was like a small, round bean; solid and smooth. Jovita De Leon, 62, described the lump she felt in her left breast. Over time as it grew, she felt something else deep in the pit of her stomach – fear. It was enough to scare her into seeking a doctor.

Visits to the doctor were not common for De Leon who doesn’t have health insurance and whose income is limited by the number of sewing jobs she can get. She works as a seamstress out of her home on San Antonio’s West Side. Without a vehicle, transportation to a doctor’s office is problematic. But this time she needed to get there. “What if the lump was cancer?” she thought to herself.

As a mother, grandmother and caretaker of her 94-year-old ill father, De Leon couldn’t afford to be sick. Her family needed her.

It took two weeks, but with help from her grown children and money from her job, De Leon was able to gather the $75 needed for a visit to the doctor. After her clinical exam, De Leon still didn’t have all the answers. She knew it was serious when the doctor told her it was urgent she get a mammogram.

“He even gave me my money back,” De Leon said.

The physician sent her home with a list of phone numbers for clinics that offered low-cost scans. Even with $75 and clinic phone numbers, De Leon, who only speaks Spanish, had problems communicating her needs over the phone and trouble saving the $300 needed for the test.

Months passed and De Leon began to feel sick and listless. She had fever and intense pain. After several failed attempts to secure a mammogram, her morale was shot.

It was the fall of 2011 and Thanksgiving was quickly approaching. On one of De Leon’s many sleepless nights, she saw an advertisement on television for an upcoming free health fair to be held in front of San fernando Cathedral. It seemed to be De Leon’s last hope. So her daughter, Gabriela Benavides, drove her downtown the next day. They arrived at 7 a.m. But to their dismay, police officers were closing down the streets. A fire that ignited the next day. They arrived at 7 a.m. But to their dismay, police officers were closing down the streets. A fire that ignited in a building nearby caused the cancellation of the fair. Discouraged, desperate and in pain, De Leon prayed for help and hope.

“Dr. Santillan was very warm. He spoke to me in Spanish. He understood me. He was very kind and it was the fall of 2011 and Thanksgiving was quickly approaching. On one of De Leon’s many sleepless nights, she saw an advertisement on television for an upcoming free health fair to be held in front of San fernando Cathedral. It seemed to be De Leon’s last hope. So her daughter, Gabriela Benavides, drove her downtown the next day. They arrived at 7 a.m. But to their dismay, police officers were closing down the streets. A fire that ignited in a building nearby caused the cancellation of the fair. Discouraged, desperate and in pain, De Leon prayed for help and hope.

Doctors told De Leon she’d need surgery immediately. Two weeks before Christmas, on Dec. 9, 2011, De Leon underwent a complete mastectomy (surgical removal) of her left breast. Alfredo Santillan, M.D., San Antonio surgical oncologist and assistant professor in the School of Medicine, performed the procedure. Dr. Santillan is a UT Medicine San Antonio surgical oncologist and assistant professor in the School of Medicine.

“My luck changed that day,” De Leon said.

“This lag time puts Latinas at greater risk of being diagnosed with larger tumors and more advanced-stage breast cancer. The delay can affect prognosis,” said Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H., who is an author on the study and director of the IHPR and Redes En Acción. “With cancer being the leading cause of Latino death, this study also signals a greater need for ethnically and culturally appropriate interventions to facilitate Latinas’ successful entry into, and progression through the cancer care system.”

For De Leon, the time delay was much longer. It was an entire year after she first discovered the lump in her breast that she learned about a financial assistance program for Bexar County residents, signed up and received the referral for the diagnostic mammogram she needed.

By then, she could see the lump protruding through her skin. The imaging revealed several more tumors that had developed. A biopsy was the next step and she was put in touch with doctors at the Cancer Therapy & Research Centers (CTRC) at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio.

“As soon as I came to the CTRC, everything moved fast,” De Leon said. Two days later, she underwent a seven-hour biopsy and finally received the news she’d waited so long for. De Leon had two types of cancer – invasive ductal carcinoma and ductal carcinoma in situ with focal micro-invasion. Invasive ductal carcinoma is the most commonly diagnosed breast cancer in women. It grows through the milk duct walls into the surrounding breast tissue and can spread to other parts of the body. Ductal carcinoma in situ is more contained, but is the precursor for invasive cancer.

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What is a patient navigator?

Patient navigators are trained, culturally sensitive health care workers who provide support and guidance throughout the cancer care continuum. They help people navigate through the maze of doctor’s offices, clinics, hospitals, outpatient centers, insurance and payment systems, patient-support organizations, and other components of the health care system. Services are designed to support timely delivery of quality standard cancer care and ensure that patients, survivors and families are satisfied with their encounters with the cancer care system. Patient navigator activities designed to achieve these outcomes include:

- Coordinating appointments with providers to ensure timely delivery of diagnostic and treatment services;
- Maintaining communication with patients, survivors, families and the health care providers to monitor patient satisfaction with the cancer care experience;
- Ensuring that appropriate medical records are available at scheduled appointments;
- Arranging language translation or interpretation services;
- Facilitating financial support and helping with paperwork;
- Arranging transportation and/or child/elder care; and
- Facilitating linkages to follow-up services.

Other navigator activities include community outreach, providing access to clinical trials and development of partnerships with local organizations and groups (e.g., referrals to other services and/or cancer survivor support groups).

Source: National Cancer Institute Center for Community Outreach and Education

**Learn more about patient navigation in “A Patient Navigation Manual for Latino Audiences: The Redes En Acción Experience,” a bilingual guidebook that aims to motivate and guide health care providers across the nation to develop patient navigation services that can help Latino patients overcome barriers to timely health care. The manual outlines the step-by-step approach and resources to help providers and groups learn about and consider adding navigators. Visit redesenaccion.org/PatientNavigatorsManual.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION LEARN MORE about the Institute for Health Promotion Research and the patient navigator program at ihpr.uthscsa.edu. Visit the Cancer Thiamin & Research Center at cctr.net or call Sheri Ortiz at 210-450-5312.**
I came here to study gender biomedical career.

Since 2003 Dr. Lu has supervised
finds time for her family’s activities.

By Catherine Duncan

A woman scientist. Her research
and a role model of a successful
scientist, Dr. Lu's enthusiasm and
from adipocyte (fat). As a brilliant
understanding mood and emotion
has opened a whole new aspect of
research. Together with her great
wealth of knowledge, inspires and
research, together with her great
wealth of knowledge, inspires and
research and not go into the clinic,” she said.

Healthy Futures of Texas
Dr. Cantu partnered with the non-profit corporation to prevent unplanned pregnancies in teens and adults. Nursing students will use the Abstinence-Plus program in the community.

In all of the programs, I give direction, but the nursing students do the teaching and work with the community members,” she said.

“This gives the students a perspective they will not get from just treating patients at the bedside. Students must understand the context of the community in order to better treat each individual patient.”

Women scientists lead efforts to fight cancer

Vivienne Rebel, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of family and community health systems, grew up on the city’s West Side. “That is my barrio. I have gotten so much from my career in nursing. I want to give back, and there are limited resources on the West Side.”

Dr. Cantu partners with local non-profit and governmental agencies to improve the health of these residents while providing nursing students invaluable hands-on experience. As part of these programs, nursing students work with residents to encourage healthy eating, exercise and behavioral changes that affect their overall health. To accomplish these goals, she has developed health-related projects including:

Good Samaritan Community Services
For the past five summers, nursing students team with Good Samaritan staff members to host the Healthy Choices for Kids day camp. Children have fun while learning about diet, exercise and other healthy choices.

Undergraduate nursing students work with the elderly at the Senior Center. Students use culturally appropriate practices to show seniors how to make food in a healthier manner. Students also walk with seniors to encourage exercise.

Adelita Cantu, Ph.D., RN, assistant professor of family and community health systems, grew up on the city’s West Side. “That is my barrio. I have gotten so much from my career in nursing. I want to give back, and there are limited resources on the West Side.”

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La Fe Policy Research & Education Center
Dr. Cantu and the non-profit center received an AARP grant targeting seniors who are food insecure on the West Side. Nursing students educate seniors about resources available for getting food.

San Antonio Metropolitan Health District
She worked with the public agency to receive a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant for Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities. This program concentrates on food deserts, history and health are areas on the West Side lacking healthy food availability. In seven convenience stores, the program provided refrigerated units to hold fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables.

Healthy Choices, created by Adelita Cantu, Ph.D., RN, assistant professor of family and community health systems, grew up on the city’s West Side. “That is my barrio. I have gotten so much from my career in nursing. I want to give back, and there are limited resources on the West Side.”

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Healthy Choices, created by Adelita Cantu, Ph.D., RN, is a curriculum taught by nursing students from the UT Health Science Center.

Women scientists lead efforts to fight cancer

Vivienne Rebel, M.D., Ph.D., assistant
professor of cellular and structural biology, and Gail Tomlison, M.D., Ph.D., professor of pediatrics, are two women in science who play crucial roles at the Greehey Children’s Cancer Research Institute. Dr. Rebel dedicates her time to research that could one day translate to new therapies, while Dr. Tomlison cares for seriously ill children and seeks to translate research discoveries.

Dr. Tomlison, who holds the Greehey Distinguished Chair in the Genetics of Cancer, is division chief of hematologic-oncology. She also holds the Greehey Distinguished Chair for the Children’s Cancer Research Institute Director at the Greehey Institute where she serves as interim director. She sees hospitalized children and has a grant from the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) to study pediatric liver cancer. This work is developing into a national and international clinical research trial.

Dr. Rebel investigates the properties of stem cells in a bone marrow disease called myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS). “Stem cells are the only cells in the body that have a seemingly unlimited capacity to proliferate just like cancer cells,” she said. “I thought that by studying stem cells, we may learn about cancer.” Dr. Rebel’s laboratory is using a mouse model to try to understand what is going wrong in the production of blood-forming stem cells that may eventually lead to MDS and, in some cases, to leukemia. “It is thought that the culprit cell of MDS is the blood-forming stem cell,” she said.

Dr. Tomlison became intrigued by the molecular basis of cancer while a biochemistry student at Duke University. “I was interested in how some of the biochemical findings could influence the care of pediatric diseases such as leukemia,” she said. “After I became more established, I focused my efforts on understanding genetic causes of pediatric tumors. All with a translational goal in mind to help guide therapies or understand causes so that, whenever possible, diseases could be prevented or detected early. Most pediatric cancers have historically not been thought to be preventable. It is a goal, albeit a long way out,” Dr. Tomlison is principal investigator on a $2.7 million CPRIT grant to empower health-care providers to map out cancer risks of their patients and to share information about family history as an important factor. The grant, awarded in 2012, also supports screening services for people at high risk for cancer who may not have adequate access to screening.

Dr. Rebel admires women scientists such as Bettie Sue Masters, Ph.D., the Robert A. Welch Foundation Distinguished Chair in Chemistry at the University of Texas at Austin. “I am inspired by Bettie Sue Masters and, of course, other women scientists who are doing excellent work in their fields,” Dr. Rebel said. “I want to be one of these women scientists. I want to inspire the next generation of women scientists.”

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Even as a childhood cancer survivor – or rather, because he was a childhood cancer survivor – Dr. Greg Aune knew he wouldn’t be working in pediatric oncology.

Nevertheless, that’s where he finds himself today, with a special focus on survivorship issues: specifically, the cardiac problems that can plague cancer survivors decades after a recovery. More than 20 years after the sports-loving high school kid was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s disease, Gregory Aune, M.D., Ph.D., is a pediatric oncologist in the School of Medicine at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio. He’s establishing a lab that approaches chemotherapy-induced heart problems from two perspectives: that of pediatric oncologist and laboratory cancer scientist. He is also the first graduate of the pediatric hematology-oncology fellowship made possible by the Greehey Pediatric Fellowship in Hematology Oncology endowment. Things would have been different for Dr. Aune without that diagnosis. He might have gone into coaching or journalism instead of medicine. He would not have donated sperm in anticipation of the harsh cancer treatments that would destroy his fertility, and he would not have the two sets of twins who rump with him and his wife, neonatologist Christine Aune, M.D.

But as a 16-year-old he suffered through 10 months of chemotherapy, losing 80 pounds and a year of school. He developed severe abdominal pain from chemotherapy-induced paralytic ileus, a serious shutdown of his digestive system.

Dr. Aune says he behaved like many teenagers receiving cancer therapy and was not eager to talk about his symptoms. He waited a week to tell anybody about the abdominal pain. After that he had to receive his nutrition intravenously for several months. So over time, as much as Dr. Aune had once wanted to get away from that environment, “all that toxicity got me thinking that there has to be a better way to do this.”

It’s also given him a deeper understanding of what his young patients are going through, even when they try to keep it inside.

“I’m saying, ‘What’s going on in there? I know you’re not telling me stuff!’

Dr. Aune focused on medical research throughout college, medical school, and graduate school. Later, when he gave a talk during his pediatric residency at Johns Hopkins on the health problems related to cancer survivorship, he was stunned at how many people approached him to say they hadn’t thought about those issues before. With 13 million adult and pediatric cancer survivors in the United States today and 20 million projected by 2022, both groups face significant and special health issues. To Dr. Aune it was obvious.

He continued his work, coming to the Health Science Center in 2008 to begin fellowship training in pediatric hematology-oncology. About that time he began to suffer from increasing exhaustion and shortness of breath. For a while he blamed his fatigue on the demands life puts on two busy physicians with four small children. Then he was diagnosed with critical aortic valve stenosis.

During the pre-surgical work-up to replace his aortic valve, his cardiologist insisted his coronary arteries would be clear because of his young age of 35. But with his knowledge of survivorship studies, Dr. Aune was not surprised to learn he also was suffering from severe coronary artery disease.

That life-threatening experience steered Dr. Aune’s research from experimental cancer therapeutics into an area of emerging importance – the basic science of cardiac disease in pediatric cancer survivors. But building momentum for this new area of research is challenging in a world focused on cures.

The world of oncology and cancer research is set up to keep doing what it’s doing now, and what drives it is the damage that results in late health effects in survivors.”

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Survivor + Activist = Philanthropist

Annabelle Jones lives to improve the future of the next generations. Retired after 33 years of serving children as an elementary schoolteacher, she continues to make a difference in children’s lives by reading with them at her local library and working on projects in her community to help create a healthy future. As an advocate for the preservation of natural resources, she shares with others her philosophy that everyone should “tread lightly on the earth.” Jones is committed to reducing her carbon footprint. She is proud of the fact that she is “98 percent off the grid” through her use of solar energy.

In the summer of 1989 Jones’ spirit was tested when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Fueled by her inherent courage and devotion to her health, her job and her family in her hometown of San Angelo, Jones sought the expertise and a second opinion from physicians at the Cancer Therapy & Research Center (CTRC) at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio where she decided to undergo treatment.

Bravely, Jones beat breast cancer and believes research at the CTRC played a major role in her survival. “At the CTRC I felt I received kind, generous and professional care that fit my needs and allowed me to go home to San Angelo, finish raising my children, and complete graduate school and international studies,” she said.

Today, Jones is an activist for several non-profit organizations with the goal of beating breast cancer by 2020. Most recently, she made the decision to endow the CTRC with a bequest through her will to be used for breast cancer research. Jones believes research is the key to unlocking life’s mysteries. Growing up in the 1950s, she vividly remembers collecting nickels and dimes to contribute to the cause of eliminating polio and developing the vaccine used worldwide today. “I believe research is the answer. There have been so many advances in breast cancer treatment since I was diagnosed in 1989.”

Recalling her childhood memories, she knows that each contribution to vital research can make that goal a reality. “I am just a retired school teacher, but I believe we all should get a checkup or take one of their new classes in healthy cooking.” She has been an active member of the CTRC Cabinet since its establishment in 1996 and enjoys her membership in the Laureate Society.

She has also reached out to others after her successful battle with cancer by participating in the Breast Cancer Coalition. As a breast cancer activist, Jones has, for many years, been a member of the Alamo Breast Cancer Foundation and a regular volunteer for the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium that brings together thousands of health care professionals from around the world focused on curing breast cancer. The word “philanthropy” is derived from the Greek language generally meaning “love of humankind.” Annabelle Jones demonstrates that being a philanthropist is within reach for everyone who acts to enhance the quality of life and help others in need. She describes herself as a survivor and an activist, but she has become a philanthropist, giving from her heart to improve the future health of others. She joins the UT Health Science Center in their goal “to make lives better.”

Natalie Gutierrez contributed to this story.

HONORING YOUR GENEROSITY
Laureate Society pays tribute to donors

Annabelle Jones is a proud member of the Laureate Society at the UT Health Science Center. You can be a member too! The Laureate Society was established to pay tribute to those who have made gifts to the UT Health Science Center through a variety of estate planning vehicles including bequests, life income gifts and insurance policies. Members share the common bond of generosity and visionary leadership, nourishing the university’s continued success.

Contact us if you have made a gift or plan to give. We look forward to recognizing and honoring your generosity that has a lasting impact on our future generations and helps make lives better.

For more information about the Laureate Society, gift options or ways to give, visit giftplanning@uthscsa.edu or contact Kent Hamilton in the Gift Planning Office at 210-367-3001 or e-mail hamiltonk@uthscsa.edu.

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Saks Fifth Avenue and the CTRC at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio team up for the

KEY TO THE CURE

Charity Shopping Weekend Oct. 17 - 20

Enjoy exciting in-store activities, entertainment, food and prizes. A percentage of all sales benefit the Cancer Therapy & Research Center.

Beginning Oct. 1, purchase a limited-edition KEY TO THE CURE T-shirt designed by Emilio Pucci. All proceeds from the T-shirt sales benefit the CTRC.

For more information, call 210-567-2508.

Jennifer Aniston is the 2013 Entertainment Industry Foundation’s Women’s Cancer Research Fund ambassador for Saks Fifth Avenue’s 2013 KEY TO THE CURE.

Saks Fifth Avenue’s 2013 KEY TO THE CURE T-shirt by Emilio Pucci

By Saren Sicer

Nurses, students, community members encouraged to preserve ‘spirit of nursing’

By Rosanne Fohn

Although she has been a nurse for 42 years, it wasn’t until Maria Welisch, RN, B.B.A., LFNA, experienced the compassionate care of nursing firsthand that she felt the immense pride of being a nurse.

Welisch, vice president of corporate education for Morningside Ministries, was the keynote speaker at the Nursing Advisory Council (NAC) spring luncheon. The philanthropic arm of the School of Nursing, the NAC provides student scholarships, funds research and supports major projects, such as the recently opened Center for Simulation Innovation.

A member of the NAC, Welisch said that a few years ago she and her husband received the phone call that parents dread—her teenage daughter had been in a terrible wreck.

“When I walked into the emergency room, I was in nurse mode. I asked all the technical questions about Jessica’s blood pressure and how many units of blood she’d had. Then, the ‘mom’ part of me stepped in for the six days that she was in a coma. The nurses were so patient with my repeated questions and concerns,” she said, and noticed the smallest ways to provide comfort.

Jessica was so particular about her appearance and cleanliness. “They sang childhood songs with me to Jessica. And they were the first to notice that my younger daughter could not approach Jessica because of her appearance.”

The nurses trimmed Jessica’s hair and rewrapped the turban so that she looked as though she had just washed her hair. “That is the heart and spirit of nursing,” Welisch said. “I never fully appreciated the impact we can have as nurses on our patients until then.”

To support the spirit of nursing through the NAC or to become a member, contact Gwen Notestine at 210-156-5313 or Notestine@uthscsa.edu.
(continued)

**School of Medicine**

J. Jeffrey Andrews, M.D., professor and chair of the Department of Anesthesiology in the School of Medicine, is secretary of the American Board of Anesthesiology.

Antonio Anzaldo, M.D., professor of medicine and director of the Interventional Pulmonary Physiology Program, is a member of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and the National Academy of Medicine (NAM). He is also a member of the Board of Governors of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), the official publication of the Society for Experimental Biology (SFB). He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the American Society for Pharmacology, is serving as editor of the Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (JPET). He is also an associate editor for the prestigious journal, Pharmacological Reviews.

Lisa Gerak, Ph.D., assistant professor of pathology and medical education in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, anesthesiology, emergency medicine, and critical care medicine. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), the official publication of the Society for Experimental Biology (SFB). She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the American Society for Pharmacology, is serving as editor of the Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (JPET). He is also an associate editor for the prestigious journal, Pharmacological Reviews.

Donald Dudley, M.D., professor of obstetrics and gynecology and director of the Women's Health Research Center, was recently elected to the National Academy of Medicine (NAM). He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), the official publication of the Society for Experimental Biology (SFB). He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the American Society for Pharmacology, is serving as editor of the Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (JPET). He is also an associate editor for the prestigious journal, Pharmacological Reviews.

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Paul Fitzpatrick, Ph.D., professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), the official publication of the Society for Experimental Biology (SFB). He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the American Society for Pharmacology, is serving as editor of the Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (JPET). He is also an associate editor for the prestigious journal, Pharmacological Reviews.

Anette Fogholtji, M.A., assistant professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences, is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), the official publication of the Society for Experimental Biology (SFB). She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the American Society for Pharmacology, is serving as editor of the Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (JPET). He is also an associate editor for the prestigious journal, Pharmacological Reviews.

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Dental School

Irene Bauer-Maks, D.M.D., M.P.H., professor and chair of the Department of Endodontics at the Oregon Health & Science University. Dr. Bauer-Maks completed her dental degree at the University of Pennsylvania in 1970, and her M.P.H. in epidemiology at the University of Michigan in 1978. Her research interests include clinical and epidemiological studies of periodontal diseases, prevention of periodontal diseases, and the development of dental treatment guidelines. She has been a professor at Oregon Health & Science University since 1982.

Frieda M. Schnerk, D.M.D., M.S., M.P.H., professor and director of the Research Division at the University of the Pacific. Dr. Schnerk is a specialist in the field of periodontal disease and has written extensively on the subject. She is also a member of the American Academy of Periodontology and the American Dental Association.

School of Health Professions

Martha Acosta, Ph.D., P.T., O.C.S., F.A.A.P., associate professor in the Department of Physical Therapy at the University of California, San Francisco. Dr. Acosta is a consultant for the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties and a member of the American Academy of Hip Replacement. She is also a member of the American Physical Therapy Association's Research Committee.

Dentistry

Dr. Ross is also a member of the Society of Primatology: co-chair of the American Professional Development for the Council of Membership and Executive Committee and the Resident Forum Membership Committee of the U.S. and Canadian Academy of Dental Medicine. She is also on the editorial board of the journal Periodontology.

Nicole Biddle, M.D., an assistant professor in the Department of the National Health Medical Research Council. Dr. Biddle is a member of the prestigious American Academy of Medicine, is a member of the National Academy of Medicine, is a member of the American Academy of Cancer Research, is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and is a member of the Academy of Scientific Advancement.
HARGROVE IS TRAILBLAZER IN FORENSICS FIELD

BY TINA LUTHER

Dr. Hargrove is the first woman at the Bexar County Medical Examiner’s Office to hold this position. Although more women are entering the field, toxicology historically has been a male-dominated field. Her path to this fascinating career began during her studies as a graduate student in the forensic and Analytical Toxicology program in the Health Science Center’s School of Health Professions. “It was a great program that opened my eyes to a lot of specialties such as environmental toxicology, clinical toxicology and post-mortem toxicology.” A six-week rotation at the Bexar County Medical Examiner’s Office, located on the Health Science Center’s Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long (main) campus, sparked her interest in post-mortem toxicology. “I loved working in the lab and thought it was interesting to see how toxicology could play a role in deaths,” she said. “It helps give families closure to the pacing of their loved ones who may have died unexpectedly.”

This program stood out in a very particular way to Dr. Hargrove. “When I finished the practicum I knew that’s what I wanted to do,” she said. About six months later, a toxicology chemist position opened at the Medical Examiner’s Office. She was called by the office and was hired on the spot. Soon after graduating in 2007, she pursued her Ph.D. in pharmacology in the Health Science Center’s Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and became certified by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology as a forensic toxicology specialist. She was appointed chief toxicologist and completed her Ph.D. in 2013.

Dr. Hargrove speaks humbly about her advancement and appointment as chief toxicologist and credits her success to the influence of her professors at the Health Science Center. “I had a lot of personal interaction from professors who guided me every step of the way,” she said. “They were role models to me both personally and professionally and showed me how to help students, who now I enjoy mentoring.”

Today, she runs the post-mortem lab and oversees approximately 2,500 cases per year, helping determine cause of death. Additionally, the Medical Examiner’s Office handles some toxicology testing for persons who are suspected of driving under the influence. These cases have dramatically increased from approximately 250 to 4,000 cases annually since the enactment of the mandatory blood-draw law in Bexar County.

She and her team run thousands of drug panels yearly and oftentimes quantitate their findings. Although blood is primarily tested, urine and tissues, such as muscle, are also included in testing samples at times in the investigation. “Illegal drugs. Prescription drugs. Heavy metals. Cyanide. If it’s poisonous, even if it’s not a drug, if it can kill you; we’ll look for it,” she said. Once the investigation is complete, it is sent to the medical examiner, and, together, they review the entire case to confidently determine a cause of death. In this process she helps the medical examiner with researching and interpreting various findings, such as determining combinations, concentrations and influences of drugs, alcohol and poisons. “Interpretation is what I enjoy most about my job,” she said. “Seeing an entire case and determining if and how a drug caused a death continues to intrigue me.”

Learning never stops for Dr. Hargrove, and to her, it is second nature. “The Health Science Center absolutely prepared me for the position that I have today. I am very thankful to the schools for their programs and professors,” she said. “They prepared me for a career that I love and a job that allows me to do so much for others in our community.”
Ours is a story of hope. Compassion and joy. Commitment, vision and inspiration. We engage our minds and talents, and give from our hearts, to help and heal. We touch the lives of thousands, to serve those in need, here and around the world. And, through it all, we work to make lives better.

Thank you for all you do to make our story so remarkable. You’re the reason we’re able to write the next chapter.