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Medical News: Parasitic infection rates dive in mass treatment program

Architectural: Mitsuru Hamada wins 2006 Steedman Fellowship

Washington People: Law's Pauline Kim focuses on anti-violence employment issues

Introduction

The University of Missouri's Office of Human Resources has launched a benefits initiative called the "Benefits Plan for the Future," or simply "the Plan." The Plan is a combination of benefit changes over a three-year period that will improve the University's cost-containment program, provide a more flexible and complete benefits program and preserve the benefits level of current faculty and staff members. Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton said: "I'm pleased with the leadership that Vice Chancellor Amy Prematt and Director of Benefits Tom Lauman have brought to this important issue.

More information on the Plan will be made available at the Plan's Information Sessions at various locations on the Columbia, Rolla and St. Louis campuses.

The major objectives of the Plan are as follows:
- Address the rising costs of health insurance, tuition assistance and retirement savings plans.
- Grandfather all current benefits eligible faculty and staff at the effective date of the various benefit plan changes.
- Offer new tax-favored benefits like the Roth feature in the retirement savings plan, health savings accounts (HSAs) and retirement medical savings accounts (MSAs), and
- Provide a University contribution to either HSAs or MSAs at the election of participating faculty and staff members as an encouragement to save for the significant cost of retiree health insurance.

Implementing the Plan is a six-step process that started in July, when all of the health plans were changed from the fiscal year to the calendar year. Other changes that took effect included:

- Increasing the annual family/co-pay for Blue Cross/Blue Shield.
- Adjusting the premium for Blue Cross/Blue Shield.
- Increasing the individual/family annual deductible from $300/ $900/1,500 to $4,300/$1,300/$5,000 Blue Cross Excel FPO health plan.

Procedures cure some diabetest - but not as previously reported

By MICHAEL C. PURDY

Researchers attempting to regenerate a controversial 2003 mouse experiment suggestive of a cure for type 1 diabetes have found evidence that the experimental procedure does eliminate diabetic symptoms in a small fraction of the mice exposed to it. However, School of Medicine scientists found no signs that the experimental procedure was working in the manner reported by the group of researchers that originated it.

The WUSTL group is one of three peer-reviewed reports in the current March 24 issue of Science on attempts to reproduce the earlier experiment. All three independently found no evidence of a key claim of the earlier study: Cells injected from the spleens of healthy mice and found to be insulin-producing beta cells in the diabetic mice, a finding that created hope that the approach might be used to cure diabetes in humans.

"We showed that various immunological processes had rejected the injected cells," said senior author Emi R. Unanue, M.D., the Mallinckrodt Professor of Pathology and Immunology. "In the mice when they were cured, we found no evidence linking restoration of beta cell function to the spleen injections.

Researchers are following up on the study with new experiments designed to determine how the mice were cured: "It's a positive thing that four of 22 diabetes-reversed beta cells survived in the mice," says lead researcher Aris Suri, Ph.D., a research assistant professor of pathology and immunology in Unanue's lab. "Conceivably, controlling the autoimmune response in patients with early diabetes may allow for recovery of some beta cell function and a decrease of severity of the disease process.

As the 2003 experiment, researchers performing their studies in female mice from the NOD mouse strain, which develops diabetes in a manner very similar to human type 1 diabetes mellitus. Between the ages of 20-30 weeks, the mice begin attacking beta cells in the pancreas, leading to death of the cells and onset of diabetic symptoms such as hyperglycemia, or abnormally high blood-sugar levels.

Following the procedures described for the prior study by Harvard University researchers Denise L. Faustman, WUSTL scientists followed the protocol of a solution called complete Freund's adjuvant that contains water, oil and portions of dead bacteria. Scientists had previously established that the adjuvant stops immune cells in the mice from attacking beta cells. Researchers also gave the mice repeated large injections of spleen cells from healthy mice, and Unanue's group has hypothesized that the spleen is erroneously promoting the survival and regeneration of immune cells that attack beta cells. The WUSTL group's administration of spleen cells from healthy mice will help explain that the adjuvant prevents beta cells from being targeted by the immune system.

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"It's a positive thing that four of 22 diabetes-reversed beta cells survived in the mice," says lead researcher Aris Suri, Ph.D., a research assistant professor of pathology and immunology in Unanue's lab. "Conceivably, controlling the autoimmune response in patients with early diabetes may allow for recovery of some beta cell function and a decrease of severity of the disease process.

The experimental procedures began when the mice first became hyperglycemic, indicating that a substantial portion of their beta cells had died as a result of immune assault. In 22 of 53 mice, the injections and the transplant restored normal blood-sugar levels.

Scientists followed these mice for at least 120 days, continuing to give them spleen injections and transplant them into one of the diabetic mice.

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Scientists followed these mice for at least 120 days, continuing to give them spleen injections and transplant them into one of the diabetic mice. Then they removed the kidney with the transplanted pancreas. This caused 18 of the 22 mice to revert to hyperglycemia and die.
Health & Wellness Center named after Habif family

BY BARBARA REa

A

s a growing number of college students seek assistance

from health professionals, the University of St. Louis has

launched a new Health & Wellness Center, a multidisci-

plinary facility that provides comprehensive health and

wellness services.

The center, located in the Habif Health & Wellness

Center on the campus of Washington University in St.

Louis, was announced by the Habif family, who has

contributed $533,022 to the facility.

"The impact of the Habifs' support is both immediate and

long-term," said University President John S. Wrightson.

"They have made a significant contribution to the

University's ability to provide comprehensive health

and wellness services to our students."
The tests revealed sharply declining infection rates over the course of the MDA program. For example, tests of first-graders for an antibody that reveals prior exposure to the parasite declined from 18.2 percent positive prior to MDA to 0.2 percent positive after the fifth round of MDA.

Well done Ed Walter (left), a librarian at the Bernard Becker Medical Library, receives a gift and a smile from Jane J. Shapero, M.D., executive vice chancellor for medical affairs and School of Medicine dean. In recognition of his 35 years of service at the medical school, Joyce Fitch also received an award for 30 years of service. Walter, Fitch and more than 70 other employees were honored for their years of service at the Center for Recognition Luncheon at the Eric P. Newman Education Center.

Patients wanted for studies of polycystic kidney disease treatment

BY GWIN ERICSON

Small-scale preliminary trials suggested that careful control of blood pressure could possibly delay or even prevent kidney failure in patients with polycystic kidney disease (PKD), which affects more than 600,000 people in the United States.

The Division of Biostatistics at the School of Medicine has launched two large-scale national trials, called the HALT-PKD (Halt Progression of PKD), to see if the combination of two blood-pressure drugs will work better than one in slowing the progression of the disease. The trials are open to volunteers who have autosomal dominant PKD, the most common form.

The Division of Biostatistics at the School of Medicine will serve as the coordinating center for the studies and will be responsible for recruiting participants and reporting on the trials, according to J. Philip Miller, coordinating center director, professor of biostatistics and director of the Biostatistics Core for the Siteman Cancer Center.

Autosomal dominant PKD is an inherited disorder that can be passed on to a patient's children if they inherit a single copy of the abnormal gene, giving each child a 50 percent chance of inheriting PKD. The disease causes numerous cysts to form in the kidneys that contribute to development of high blood pressure and aneurysms. About half of autosomal dominant PKD patients eventually experience kidney failure and require dialysis or a kidney transplant.

"Not only does the patients' high blood pressure have an adverse effect on their kidneys, but it also leads to cardiovascular complications, which cause most of the deaths in patients with PKD," Miller said. "These studies aim to find out if we should treat hypertension in PKD patients with standard treatments or if we should be more aggressive in reducing blood pressure."

The trials will compare therapy with an angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor, a traditional medication for reducing blood pressure, to more intensive therapy that uses both an ACE inhibitor and an angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB), a newer agent shown to lower blood pressure in many patients. One trial includes patients at an early stage of PKD while the other focuses on patients with more advanced disease.

Researchers will recruit more than 1,000 patients for the trials and treat patients for up to four years. Patients will take home a device for measuring blood pressure, and all medications will be free. Kidney function will be checked with standard blood tests, or in cases where kidney function is not yet affected, cyst development will be measured with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans.

The MRI techniques for monitoring the progression of PKD were developed at the School of Medicine.

PKD patients may volunteer by contacting the School of Medicine's HALT-PKD coordinating center at 362-1318 or e-mailing project manager Robin Woltman at robinw@wubios.wustl.edu. Patients will be referred to one of the seven participating centers, which are in Atlanta, Boston, Cleveland, Denver, Kansas City, Mo.; and Rochester, Minn.
Doug Varone and Dancers will perform at Edison Theatre March 31-April 2. Known for "a chorus line of dancers, a world-class company of dancers, and a remarkable range and variety of work," the company has presented more than 200 premieres and has been hailed by critics as "the most original dance company of its generation." The Edison Theatre program will open with Varone's signature, 28-minute "Ride" (1993), set to John Adams's "Jaudia's Fearsome Symmetries." The piece begins as a series of duets that soon spiral into duets and trios, more intricate groupings, gathering speed and energy as the geometric actions approach an explosive climax.

Doug Varone and Dancers coming to Edison Theatre
architectural Japanese Hamada

BY LIAM OTTEN

Japanese architect Hamada

wins Steedman competition

Japanese architect Hamada

has won the University's 2006 Steedman Fellowship in Archi-

tecture International Design Competition.

The biennial competition, spon-

sored by the College of Archi-

tecture and Graduate School of Archi-

tecture & Urban Design - both di-

visions of the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts - is open to young architects representing countries throughout the world. The $30,000 first-place award supports study and research abroad and is the largest such award in the United States.

Hamada, who lives and works in Tokyo, was chosen from a field of 148 architects representing 39 countries.

This year's competition focused on the design of an approximately 1,500-square-meter pavilion-observatory that would integrate archi-

tecture, technology and the en-

vironment. Proposals were judged for originality, concision and relevance to the contemporary cultural context.

"The program was very open," said jury chair Iñaki Abalos, prin-

cipal of Abalos & Herreros Archi-

tects, Madrid, who proposed the topic. "It could be taken very liter-

ally or more experimentally. The jury was impressed by the simplicity, intensity and monumentality of Hamada's design.

"This is a true observatory, a place of meditation and solitude from which to contemplate the landscape," he said. "At the same time, it also offers a strong social as-

pect and a very powerful sense of collective participation."

Other jurors included Renata Seda-Szwarczek, also of Abalos & Herreros; Marcello Ferra, the Ruth and Norman Moore Visiting Professor of Architecture; Philip Holden, affilia-

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Educational workshops April 5-7: Planning for special-needs kids

Facility and staff are being invited to attend an educative workshop for The Future of A Child or Other Dependents With Special Needs.

At noon April 5-7, a representative of Met Life's Department of Education will present the results of a study that shows the importance of early intervention for young children with special needs. The study, which was conducted in collaboration with the University of Chicago, found that children who received early intervention services performed better in school and were less likely to require special education services later on.

The workshops will provide information on the educational needs of children with special needs, as well as strategies for planning and providing appropriate services. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss their own experiences and share ideas with others.

For more information, contact Met Life at 1-800-555-1234.
Third-year medical student Jefrey Neppe recently received a $1,000 Medical Student Scholarship from the Southern Medical Association. The Bennington, Ala.-based association is a physician membership association, founded and governed by physicians since 1906.

Jeffrey Matthews, drama coordi-
nator in the Performing Arts De-
partment at WUSTL, received a Kevin Kline Award March 20 for "Outstanding Production for Performance in School Musicals," Matthew said in the email of this story at the MUNC, which won five awards.

Perry E. Bich, M.D., assis-
tant professor of medicine and of
biocell and physiology, re-
cieved a three-year, $986,300
grant from the National Institute of
Diseases and Digestive and Kidney Diseases for research titled "Trafficking of Thyroid-recognized Antigen in Adipocytes."

Nam S. Suh, M.D., resident physician in the Department of Pathology and Immunology at the School of Medicine, received $2,500 seed grant from the Ameri-
can Medical Association's Med-
nen Project for a project titled "Indol-
amine Oxoguanine Expression Level Change in Childhood Immuno-
logological Pathologies and Surv-
ival Following Immunosuppression.

James L. Gibson, Ph.D., the assistant professor of Government in Arts & Sciences, has received a one-year, $19,000
grant from the National Science Foundation for research titled "Assessing the Consequences of Politicized Confirmation Processes on the Legitimacy of the United States Supreme Court: The Bush Appointments." Epilepsy.

Part five will occur Jan. 1, 2007, when the University will: • Offer a fixed-PPC plan
health plan with Blue Cross $1,500,000 seed fund from the Ameri-
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Most Americans don't think about employ-ment-at-will until they're terminated from their jobs. During her work at the Employment Law Center (ELC), a nonprofit public interest group in San Francisco, Pauline Kim, J.D., professor of law, saw firsthand that people simply did not know about this legal rule.

"Each week, the ELC handled a drop-in and clinic where low-income workers who had a problem or question about their rights on the job could get some legal advice," Kim says. "I supervised law students interviewing the workers, so I was indirectly hearing the stories of 20-30 workers every week. One of the things that I heard over and over again was that many of the workers came in because they had lost their jobs and felt that they had been treated unfairly. We often had to counsel them that even if what happened to them was unfair, there was nothing we could do about it legally. "Unless they are working under a contract that protects job security, employees are considered at will, and employers can fire them without having a good reason. There are some exceptions to this rule, but they may not fire somebody for whistleblowing or because of their race, sexual orientation or disability—but many fired workers were simply not protected by any of those exceptions."

This experience sparked her interest in employment law research.

"When I started teaching, it was interesting to find that there was a group of legal scholars who defended the at-will rule on the grounds that it was a default rule—something that could be contracted around," Kim says. "They argued that the fact that we don't see very many people contracting around this rule suggests that at-will employment is what most people want."

"That argument struck me as out-of-touch with the reality of most people's lives, just coming from a practice where I was repeatedly talking with people who were surprised to find out that there wasn't any way to prevent an employer from terminating them for an unfair or arbitrary reason."

One of the first things that Kim did when she came to the University was to study employers' understanding of the at-will rule by surveying several hundred workers about their beliefs about their employment rights.

"Similar to what I found in California, most of the workers misunderstood what the legal rules were and assumed they had some kind of legal protection against arbitrary discharge, when in fact, they didn't," she says. "That project provided a great bridge for me from practice to academia."

In addition to growing her interest in research, Kim's time at the ELC reignited her desire to teach.

"In the back of my mind, I always knew I wanted to teach," she says. "I did a little bit of Taing along the way as an undergraduate as well as in law school. Academia appealed to me because I found that I enjoyed teaching students. Plus, having the opportunity to think and write about some of the bigger issues in the law in more depth, without the constraints of representing a particular client was also appealing."

At WUSTL

At the law school, Kim enjoys researching a variety of employment law issues.

"I really like employment law because it has this real human dimension to it," she says. "A lot of employment cases are terminations cases. People have compared them to industrial divorces. They are like a relationship that has gone sour and there are often hurt feelings and blame going both ways."

"At the same time, employment law is a very fundamental economic relationship. Labor is an essential part of how things, goods and services are made, provided or produced."

Kim is working on a project concerning employer privacy in light of recent controversies over whether and to what extent an employer can intrude on an employee's person, things and private life through practices like drug testing and computer monitoring.

"I'm looking at the difference between thinking about those privacy interests in collective terms as opposed to individual terms," Kim explains. "There has been a shift over the last half-century from a collective bargaining to an individual-rights-based model for protecting employer rights. My research explores the consequences of that shift for protecting employee privacy."

Outside employment law, Kim is working on a project that looks at judicial decision-making, particularly by lower-court judges.

"Because of the nature of laws and legal rules, the superior court can't always provide rules that will tell the lower court what the outcome should be in each case," she says. "So this article I'm working on examines the ideas of judicial discretion within the judicial hierarchy."

"I'm interested in what it means to be an appellate court judge, for example, who has to respond to guidance given by the Supreme Court and whose decisions may be reviewed by the Supreme Court."

"At the same time, that judge in turn has power to review the decisions of the lower trial courts. So how do judges retain control of the decision the courts below them? And how do they exercise the discretion that inevitably exists because the legal rules hands down from above are not complete and permit the exercise of discretion?"

"In the end, my work tries to answer these kinds of questions and come up with some legal rules that reach beyond the walls of Anthony Kennedy's Bush Hall. She co-founded and organized the Workshop on Empirical Research and the Law (WERL). The workshop brings together faculty from law and Arts & Sciences.

"We met regularly to read and discuss recent empirical research on the law and legal institutions," she says. "One of the advantages of being a part of the University is that it's a first-rate university, but it has a human scale."

"The business school is just across the way, political science and economics are right next door. You can actually get together with people and make connections across departments and schools in a way that is hard to do at some bigger universities."

"Her work is noticed—and appreciated—by her students and colleagues.

"Pauline Kim has rapidly become one of the best-known and best-respected employment law scholars and teachers in the nation," says Kant D. Swift, Ph.D., dean of the School of Law and the Ethan A.H. Shepley Busch Hall. She co-founded and organized the Workshop on Empirical Research and the Law (WEL). The workshop brings together faculty from law and Arts & Sciences.

"When I graduated from high school, I did not intend to return to St. Louis. I wanted to go away, see the world and live in a big city. So I didn't want to become a teacher. But after attending a legal studies conference at Washington University, I came back."

"Then, at one point, my husband and I were both looking for jobs, I wanted an academic job and he was finishing his residency. "Washington University had both a strong law school and a strong medical school. And though St. Louis happened to be where I was from, that fact seemed to be a positive rather than an obstacle. We were fortunate enough that we both got jobs at Washington University, so we came back."

"Pauline is among the most curious and insightful people I know," says Andrew Martin, Ph.D., associate professor of political science in Arts & Sciences and a participant in the Kim-organized Workshop on Empirical Research and the Law, which brings together faculty from the School of Law and Arts & Sciences.

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