Therapies for anorexia nervosa to be evaluated

BY JIM DRYDEN

School of Medicine therapists and eating disorders specialists are joining investigators at a few sites around North America to evaluate anorexia nervosa treatments. Only 25 percent of anorexia patients recover completely, and the goal of this study is to improve those odds.

Funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, the study will look at therapeutic approaches that involve families and test whether antidepressant medication can enhance the results. The researchers will compare two types of family therapy. Participants will come to one-hour family therapy sessions over a nine-month period. In addition, half of the patients with anorexia nervosa will receive treatment at the School of Medicine.

"Anorexia nervosa is the eating disorder that we've been aware of the longest, but very few large-scale studies have been conducted," said Denise E. Wilfley, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry, of medicine and of the Institute of Mental Health, the study's principal investigator.

Some 40 patient families will receive treatment at the School of Medicine. The families will be divided into four groups: Behavioral Family Therapy (BFT), an intervention that focuses on changing the patient's eating behavior; BFT and the antidepressant drug fluoxetine; Systems Family Therapy (SFT), an intervention that explores family issues that may influence the development of the disorder.

See Anorexia, Page 6

Earth's orbit creates more than a leap year

Orbital behaviors also drive climate changes, ice ages

BY TONY FITZPATRICK

The Earth's orbital behaviors are responsible for more than just the seasons. They affect the climate as well. The Earth's orbit around the sun and the degree of tilt of our planet's axis with respect to its path around the sun have implications for climate change and the advent of ice ages. People often think of orbits as circular, but they're not that smooth and simple. Orbits often are less-than-perfect eccentric circles.

"All planets travel in an ellipse around the sun, but the shape of that ellipse oscillates," Wyssen said. "When the Earth's orbit is more elliptical, the planet spends more time farther away from the sun, and the Earth gets less sunlight over the course of the year. These periods of more-elliptical orbits are separated by about 100,000 years. Ice ages occur about every 100,000 years, and they line up exactly with this change in the Earth's elliptical shape."

The purpose of the leap year is to keep our artificial calendars aligned with what the Earth actually does in its orbit around the sun and to ensure that roughly 365.25 days (365 days, 5 hours, 49 minutes per year) elapse between two successive March 20s. The need for a leap year is based on the variability of the Earth's orbit and the cycles of the physical and biological systems that affect climate change. A leap year occurs on any year that is evenly divisible by 4, but not by 100, unless it is also evenly divisible by 400. The next leap year will be Feb. 29, 2008.

Law students win international moot court crown in India

Third-year law students Andrew Nash and Samir Kaushik won the prestigious D.M. Harish Memorial International Law Moot Court Competition (DMH), which was held in Mumbai, India, Feb. 10-13. The pair defeated teams from around the world en route to the championship and eventually defeated a team from Cornell Law School in the championship round. In addition, Nash took individual honors, winning second-best oralist in the competition. Michael Pell, J.D., assistant dean for international programs and executive director of the Whitney R. Harris World Law Institute, received an international phone call from the team after its victory.

"They were excruciating but exhilarating," said Pell, who served as coach and coordinator. "Almost everyone was upset, but they were pleased that their biggest remaining challenge was getting the large trophy home from India.

The team went undefeated in the preliminary rounds, defeating teams from India and Australia. In the round-robin four-team semifinals, they defeated a team from the United States, India and Ireland. In the championship round, they defeated a team from Cornell Law School, the only other U.S. school in the competition.

This marked the first year that any U.S. school had competed in the DMH, which historically has been limited to schools from former members of the British Commonwealth. Twenty-six schools competed in this year's competition, including teams from India, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Greece, Australia, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and the United States.

The DMH is sponsored and administered by the Government Law College in Mumbai, one of the top law schools in India. It is named for the late Professor D.M. Harish, one of the framers of the post-colonial Indian tax-law system and a leading Indian lawyer and legal scholar.

DMH organizer Abhinav Bhushan called the University to congratulate the law school. "(Andrew and Samir) were very well-spoken and knowledgeable," Bhushan said. "The competition judges inform me that this was one of the finest teams they have seen in the eight-year history of the competition."

"The high quality of their presentations reflects well not only on Andrew and Samir, but also on the incredible faculty and student support network back home in St. Louis," Bhushan said.

This year's DMH required competitors to prepare oral and written arguments on a hypothetical fact pattern concerning a dispute between two fictional states, Anghore and Ratanka. The case focused on a trade treaty between Anghore, a developing state, and the Tormoy Union, an international organization based loosely upon the European Union. The case demanded extensive research into issues of international treaty law and interpretation, international human rights law and the law concerning developing
**Two professorships awarded in School of Law**

Davis joins faculty as Van Cleve Professor

Anne Marie Davis, J.D., has joined the law faculty this semester as the William M. Van Cleve Professor of Law. An award-winning scholar, she is the inaugural holder of the School of Law’s first endowed professorship in public service, the Charles Nagel Professor of Public Interest Law and Public Policy.

To be named Charles Nagel Professor

Karen Tokarz, J.D., has been named the inaugural holder of the School of Law’s first endowed professorship in public service, the Charles Nagel Professor of Public Interest Law and Public Policy.

**Campus participates in annual RecycleMania contest**

**Free vehicle inspections offered to spring break travelers**

**Volunteers needed to greet prospective students**

**Inskip named Vice President for Student Affairs**

Diverse Staff, J.D., has been named the inaugural holder of the School of Law’s first endowed professorship in public service, the Charles Nagel Professor of Public Interest Law and Public Policy.
Diabetes drug to be evaluated for depression treatment

School of Medicine scientists have linked a mutation in a gene that, when abnormal, is linked to type 2 diabetes to depression. The study, published in the journal *Neuropsychopharmacology*, adds to growing evidence that the brain-structure analysis eventually may make it possible to start treatment for schizophrenia more quickly, perhaps even before full-blown psychotic symptoms, such as hallucinations and delusions, occur.

Harms and Carmenovsky said it’s possible that shape changes in the thalamus may represent a biological marker for schizophrenia, called an endophenotype, but they can’t be sure until these initial changes can be linked to the symptoms of the illness. Some of these changes underlie the thalamus. The current study was published in the Dec. 12 issue of *The Journal of Neuroscience.*

**Schizophrenia patients and their siblings display thalamic shape abnormalities**

**By JIM DREYDEN**

**Harms**

Little malformations in the brains of patients with schizophrenia also tend to occur in their healthy siblings, according to a study at the Conte Center for the Neurosciences at the Washington University School of Medicine. Shape abnormalities were found in the thalamus, the brain area responsible for processing pain and sensory information. Dr. Scott Harms, Ph.D., senior scientist at the Conte Center, found that genetic and environmental factors such as the one that causes schizophrenia contributed to shape abnormalities in the thalamus.

Dietary supplements linked to inherited ALS may also play role in common dementia

**BY MICHAEL C. PERRY**

School of Medicine scientists have linked a mutation in a gene that, when inherited, is linked to a form of inherited ALS to depression. This is the first time we’ve studied the brain-structure analysis that may help us understand the disease,” said Sayuk.

Research has suggested that shape changes in the thalamus are markers for schizophrenia, a severe and debilitating mental illness characterized by delusions and hallucinations. Thalamic abnormalities have been observed in early stages of the disease, but it’s not clear whether these abnormalities are causally related to schizophrenia or simply markers of disease progression.

The Conte Center, in partnership with the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the National Institute of Aging (NIA), is conducting a study to determine whether shape abnormalities in the thalamus can predict the risk of developing schizophrenia. The Conte Center is a part of the Conte Brain-Structure and Function Center, which is a NIMH-funded center to study brain-structure analysis.

In the study, 80 people with schizophrenia and 40 healthy controls were imaged with a high-precision magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner. The brain scans were compared to those of 40 healthy siblings of schizophrenia patients. The siblings had a higher risk of developing schizophrenia than the healthy controls, but their shape abnormalities were not as severe as those found in the schizophrenia patients. The results suggest that shape abnormalities in the thalamus may be a biomarker for schizophrenia.

**Gene linked to inherited ALS is also linked to depression**

**Celine Harms**

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Civil rights and science highlight next Assembly Series programs

Charles J. Ogletree Jr.: A civil rights pioneer

Philip Clayton: Between science and religion

Disappearing Shanghai • Prima Donna • Monkeypox and Smallpox

Slovenian philosophers go ‘back to basics’
Saint Louis Symphony, WUSTL celebrate music of Messiaen

Musicians from Washington University and the Saint Louis Symphony will join forces to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of French composer Olivier Messiaen.

The concert — sponsored by the Department of Music in Arts & Sciences, the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra’s Community Partnership Program and KWUR 96.3 FM — is free and open to the public and begins at 8 p.m. on Monday, March 3, in the 560 Music Center, E. Desmond Lee Concert Hall.

Born in 1908-1992, one of the 20th century’s most influential composers, was known for his use of non-traditional modal scales and a keen interest in non-western traditions, such as the Indian raga system.

His thematic material was inspired primarily by his Catholic faith and the natural world, especially bird song.

Messiaen began composing at age 16 while studying at the Paris Conservatoire. After completing his studies in 1931, Messiaen was appointed organist at the Sainte Trinite Cathedral, a position he would maintain for the rest of his life.

However, with the outbreak of World War II, Messiaen was drafted into the French army and, in June 1940, was captured by the Nazis and interned as a prisoner of war in Gorlitz, Poland. As a prisoner, Messiaen was inspired primarily by his Catholic faith and the natural world, especially bird song.

Also on the program is “Quatuor pour la fin du temps” (Quartet for the End of the Time).” Discovering that his fellow prisoners included a clarinetist, a violinist and a violoncellist, Messiaen wrote a short trio, the score of which led him to add a piano and seven additional movements. The completed quartet debuted Jan. 15, 1941, for an audience of Messiaen’s fellow prisoners.

The March 3 program will highlight “Quartet for the End of Time.” Performers are pianist Sarah Carol, professor of music in Arts & Sciences; Kung, violinist for the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra; St. Louis cellist Ken Kudaim; and clarinetist Paul Garritson, teacher of applied music in Arts & Sciences.

By George, what a week! Jennifer Hulsum (left) of St. Louis Carriage Company and sophomore Scott Friedman, dressed as George Washington, ride through the Danforth Campus Feb. 20 on a carriage. The free horse and buggy rides for students were part of George Washington Week, sponsored by the sororhemy Lock & Chain and Ring Committee. Other activities included free KFC chicken and a visit by the men’s basketball team Feb. 22 and a red, white and blue benefit party for City Faces Feb. 23.

Pritzker Prize-winner Thom Mayne to speak for Architecture Lecture Series March 3

Pritzker Prize-winning architect Thom Mayne will speak for the Architecture Lecture Series March 3 on his approach to architecture and his philosophy that it is not derived from European modernism, Asian influences, or even from American precedents of the last century,” noted the Pritzker jury citation. “He has sought throughout his career to create a new original architecture, one that is truly representative of the times, unselfconscious, rooted in the culture of Southern California, especially the architecturally rich city of Los Angeles. Like the Eameses, Neutra, Schindler, and Gehry before him, Thom Mayne is an additional contribution to the tradition of innovation, exciting architectural talent that flourishes on the West Coast.”

The Pritzker Prize, which Mayne received in 2005, is generally considered architecture’s highest honor, equivalent to the Nobel Prize. In addition, Mayne and Morphosis have won more than 50 awards from the American Institute of Architects and have been the subject of group and solo exhibitions throughout the world, including a major retrospective at the Netherlands Architectural Institute in 1999. Mayne’s work has been collected in more than two dozen monographs, including the four-volume series “Morphosis: Buildings and Projects,” published by Rizzoli.

In addition to his work with Morphosis and the Institute of Architecture, Mayne currently holds a tenured professorship at the University of California, Los Angeles. This lecture is part of the Sam Fox School of Architecture’s spring Architecture Lecture Series, sponsored by the College of Architecture and Graduate School of Architecture, Urban Design & Planning. For more information call 935-9300 or visit arch.wustl.edu.

Nobel Prize-winning novelist to bring message of freedom

By Neil Schoenherr

Wole Soyinka’s plays range from comedy to tragedy, from the first Black African to win the Nobel Prize for Literature (1986), will speak at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 1, at the Grandel Theatre, 3610 Grand Square.

The talk, which is free and open to the public, is sponsored by the African and African American Studies Program and Performing Arts, both in Arts & Sciences; the St. Louis Black Repertory Company; and Fon Funes, the Henry K. Hampson Jr. Artist-in-Residence.

“Wole Soyinka: his struggle for freedom,” said John Baugh, Ph.D., the Margaret Bush Wilson Professor and director of African and African American studies. “His work is vivid, free of all self-pity, and has moved throughout his career to create a new original architecture, one that is truly representative of the times, unselfconscious, rooted in the culture of Southern California, especially the architecturally rich city of Los Angeles. Like the Eameses, Neutra, Schindler, and Gehry before him, Thom Mayne is an additional contribution to the tradition of innovation, exciting architectural talent that flourishes on the West Coast.”

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expected. Often, she said, parents are at being able to encourage their study groups. Dorothy Van Buren, Ph.D., research assistant professor of psychiatry at Washington University School of Medicine, defines the systems approach to participating in family therapy sessions with the family, what their strengths are and some areas where they might need help.

Van Ruiten describes BFT as en-countering and structuring the family situation so that eating is expected. Often, she said, parents are so fearful of anorexia nervosa that they stop offering their child to eat normally, and as the child becomes sicker, the expectation gets lower at the family level, which also commodates the eating disorder. The behavioral approach is designed to help families find ways to break that cycle," she said.

Anorexia nervosa is a chronic disorder that affects a person's relationship with food and body image, leading to a distorted perception of body weight and shape. It is characterized by an intense fear of gaining weight and a distorted body image, often leading to extreme weight loss. Anorexia nervosa is more common in young women, but it can also affect men and people of all ages. It is a serious and potentially life-threatening condition.

Moot Court WUSTL pair is first U.S. team to win
from Page 1

The conference opens at 8:30 a.m. March 1 with a day of lectures in Wilson Hall, including a free continental breakfast and lunch and concluding with a $30-per-person banquet. Participants return to Wilson at 8:30 a.m. March 2 for further discussion and reception.

For registration, agendas and further information contact the PPN at 935-4297 or visit article.wustl.edu/PPN/Registrar/PennLawConf.html.

Moot Court WUSTL pair is first U.S. team to win

Richard McDonald will travel to Washing- ton, D.C., in March to partake in that competition. Leila Nadya Saladi, J.D., the Henry H. Ober- schuld Professor of Law and direc-tor of the International Rounds at the school's award-winning international rounds program. All law students who participate in one of the international teams are aided in their preparation by attending a special seminar, "International Courts and Tribunals." The course is taught by adjunct professor Gilbert Siano, J.D., '00, an associate at the Saint Louis law firm Rosenblum, Schwartz, Rogers & Glass PC, and an alumnus of the school's Jessup moot court team.

The International Rounds competition is one of the most prestigious rounds in the world of public international law. This year's round is sponsored by the World School of Law for International Law Students. The round is a tremendous run of international rounds competition in the law student world, with many law students from our law school's Jessup moot court team that competition. The school's Jessup International Law moot Court Competition (second-year students) Sally Conroy, Sumert Jain, Andrew Lucas and Robert Zacks, Ph.D., associate professor of psychiatry at WUSTL, who also is some evidence that antide-pressants and mood stabilizers may help this patient population.

"Fluoxetine could help anorexia nervosa patients deal more effectively with the anxiety and distress associated with the disorder," Wysession said. Control- ling those symptoms could make therapy more effective. That's important because when patients do recover, there still is a 40 per-cent relapse rate.\n
Distinguished international families are welcome to partici-pate, and all family members liv-ing in a household are expected to participate in behavioral or psychotherapy sessions, family treatment, medication and medical monitoring. Are provided at no cost. For more information or to volunteer, contact project coordina-tor Nicole Ceci at 280-0076.

Why do we forget things? Human spatial focus of PNP conference

By GERRY EYRING

Do the words we use to describe an object interact with and possibly shape our view of the world around us? That’s one of the questions explored in a special conference on the psychology and philo-sophy of human spatial cognition Saturday and Sunday, March 1-2. Free and open to the public, the "Perception, Language and Space" conference brings together eminent researchers of human spatial cognition to chart the di-rection of future research via the interface between perceptual and linguistic representations of space.

Planned discussions include: Is the human categorisation of object configurations determined in part by grammatical dual systems of linguistic representation? Conversely, how does the deployment and interpretation of information gained from perceptual representa-tions affect grammatical categories and lexical organisation? And how much of spatial cognition is amenable to empirical analysis?

Sponsored by the Philosophy-Neuroscience-Psychology (PNP) program in Arts & Sciences, the program is coordinated by PNP postdoctoral fellows David M. Kaplan, Ph.D., and Cory T. Wright, Ph.D.

Invited speakers include Jeff Zacks, a professor of psychology and director of the Dynamic Cognition Laboratory at the University of California, Los Angeles, Ph.D., a psychologist from the University of Michigan; Edward Chaterjee, M.D., a cognitive neuroscientist, University of Pennsylvania; Rick Grush, Ph.D., a philosopher from the University of California, San Diego; Barbara Landau, Ph.D., cognitive scientist from Johns Hopkins University; Leonard Talmy, Ph.D., a linguist from the Hebrew University of New York; and Barbara Tversky, Ph.D., a psychologist from Stanford University.

The conference opens at 8:30 a.m. March 1 with a day of lectures in Wilson Hall, including a free continental breakfast and lunch and concluding with a $30-per-person banquet. Participants return to Wilson at 8:30 a.m. March 2 for further discussion and reception.

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Invited speakers include Jeff Zacks, a professor of psychology and director of the Dynamic Cognition Laboratory at the University of California, Los Angeles, Ph.D., a psychologist from the University of Michigan; Edward Chaterjee, M.D., a cognitive neuroscientist, University of Pennsylvania; Rick Grush, Ph.D., a philosopher from the University of California, San Diego; Barbara Landau, Ph.D., cognitive scientist from Johns Hopkins University; Leonard Talmy, Ph.D., a linguist from the Hebrew University of New York; and Barbara Tversky, Ph.D., a psychologist from Stanford University.

The conference opens at 8:30 a.m. March 1 with a day of lectures in Wilson Hall, including a free continental breakfast and lunch and concluding with a $30-per-person banquet. Participants return to Wilson at 8:30 a.m. March 2 for further discussion and reception.

For registration, agendas and further information contact the PPN at 935-4297 or visit article.wustl.edu/PPN/Registrar/PennLawConf.html.

Moot Court WUSTL pair is first U.S. team to win
Why do we forget things?

Human spatial focus of PNP conference

BY GERRY EYRING

Do the words we use to describe an object interact with and possibly shape our view of the world around us? That’s one of the questions explored in a special conference on the psychology and philosophy of human spatial cognition Saturday and Sunday, March 1-2. Free and open to the public, the "Perception, Language and Space" conference brings together eminent researchers of human spatial cognition to chart the direction of future research via the interface between perceptual and linguistic representations of space.

Planned discussions include: Is the human categorisation of object configurations determined in part by grammatical dual systems of linguistic representation? Conversely, how does the deployment and interpretation of information gained from perceptual representations affect grammatical categories and lexical organisation? And how much of spatial cognition is amenable to empirical analysis?

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Human spatial focus of PNP conference
Ruths eclipses 1,600 points in his career
A senior on the Washington University men's basketball team, Ruths scored his 1,600th point over New York University Feb. 24. He is the 10th player in WAU history to achieve this milestone.

Women's basketball to play for league title
The Bears posted victories over Brandeis University, 74-56, Feb. 22, and topping New York City. He received the award at the 2008 Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) National Indoor Championship. Feb 24. in St. Peter, Minn.

Women's tennis drops spring opener
The No. 21 women's tennis team lost its spring opener to No. 19 Texas. Feb. 23. at the Bryan Cave Moot Courtroom.

Swimming and Diving compete at the Pac-10
The men's and women's swimming and diving teams finished in fourth and second place, respectively, at the University Athletic Association (UAA) Championships in Rochester, N.Y., Feb. 21-23.

Notables

Global business expert to speak at Weidenbaum public forum
T he global operations of multi-national banks, oil, insurance and other financial firms, how activities are structured across borders and the labor-market impact of international trade. 

Obituary
Fryer, longtime professor of plastic surgery, 92
M oot F. Fryer, M.D., professor of plastic surgery in the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, died Friday, Feb. 15, at Deaconess Hospice Care Center in Evansville, Ind. He was 92.

Fryer, who graduated from the University of Indiana in 1958 and studied at the University of Rochester School of Medicine, served as a Captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during the Korean War. He then returned to the University of Indiana for his residency and fellowship training in plastic surgery. He joined the University of Louisville faculty in 1964 and served as chairman of the department of surgery from 1971 to 1982. He retired in 2001.

Fryer is survived by his wife, Martha, and three children: Scott, who is also a plastic surgeon; William; and Sarah. He is also survived by four grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

Memorial services will be held at 10 a.m. Feb. 28, in the chapel of the Deaconess Hospice Care Center in Evansville. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the M. F. Fryer Scholarship Fund at Indiana University School of Medicine, 702 W. Clinton St., Indianapolis, IN 46202.

Have you done something noteworthy?
Chains in Kerala. ... 
Marc S. Levin, M.D., associate professor of medicine in the Division of Veterans Affairs Medicine and of Gastroenterology, was awarded a four-year, $1.26 million grant from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases for research titled "Nutrient Modulation of Gene Expression in Gut Adaptation." 
Mark Manary, M.D., professor of pediatrics, was awarded the 2007 World of Children Health Grant, which provides up to $50,000 to support innovative, creative, and impactful ideas that address the health and well-being of children in Malawi.
Robert D. Schreiber, Ph.D., the Abram E. Moss Professor of Pathology and Immunology and professor of molecular virology, has received a four-year, $450,000 predoctoral training grant from the Cancer Research Institute. This grant provides support for training of graduate students in the Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences in the area of tumor immunology.
Jay Turner, Ph.D., associate professor of energy, environmental and chemical engineering, has received a two-year, $1 million grant from the National Science Foundation.

Opening night
The Olin Young Leaders Association (OYLA) held its inaugural event, "Managing the Changing Face of Business," Feb. 20 at the Knights Center. OYLA is made up of undergraduate students who have entered the full-time MBA program at the Olin Business School to pursue their MBAs immediately after or in combination with their bachelor’s degree. The event featured a panel discussion with three distinguished St. Louis businesspeople, including Jim O'Donnell, MBA '74, president of Bush O'Donnell, pictured here talking with (clockwise) Andy Nichols, MBA '08 and OYLA executive board president; Leslie Onkenhout, MBA '09 and OYLA executive board member; and Dorothy Kittle, director of corporate relations for OYLA.

Sports

Ruths' senior season has been marked by milestone after milestone. He reached another career milestone becoming the sixth WUSTL student to eclipse 1,600 points in a career.

Women's basketball to play for league title
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Women's tennis drops spring opener
The No. 21 women's tennis team lost its spring opener to No. 19 Texas University of Chicago, 5-4, Feb. 23. The Bears' team of sophomore Allison Dindar and freshman Kristin Fleming won at No. 3 doubles, 8-4, and the Red and Green were victorious at Nos. 4, 5 and 6 singles. Freshman Jaylin Bild won at No. 4 singles, 6-3, 6-1; freshman Kayla Casady won in the No. 5 slot, 6-4, 6-1, and freshman Elise Sambol pulled up the squad's third singles win, 6-0, 6-2. WUSTL returns to action Feb. 29 against Carthage College in Kenosha, Wis.

Softball notch 2-2 record in Texas
The No. 24 softball team opened the season by splitting four games at the Easton Classic in Tyler, Texas. The Bears posted victories over Mary Hardin-Baylor (7-1) and Texas at Dallas (7-1), while losing to Texas-Tyler (8-0) and East Texas Baptist (13-4). Freshman pitcher Claire Voirs posted a 2-0 record with a 2.29 earned run average in three games pitched. 

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Breathing a little easier

Mario Castro combats lung disorders in the lab and around the world

For Mario Castro, M.D., one of the best moments of 2007 was watching the first release, even breathes of a newborn girl in a rural Honduran clinic.

On the first day of a medical mission to Tutucap, Honduras—a town three hours by bus from the nearest facility with a lung specialist—Castro and his colleagues were faced with the premature baby, who was in respiratory distress and needed help fast.

"She was struggling hard to breathe," says Castro, who treats adults with asthma and other lung disorders at the School of Medicine. "Ivan Downey, a specialist in newborn medicine, was with us and showed us how to rig up a system to give them lightly pressurized oxygen using just an oxygen tank and supplies that you can pick up at a hardware store.

In just 40 hours, the baby was breathing easily on her own. That one moment made the trip worthwhile.

Castro, associate professor of medicine, is a board member of the International Medical Assistance Foundation (IMAF), a St. Louis-based group that funds the medical missions to Honduras.

"It was an eye-opening experience," Castro says. "This is what we do, and it's hard."

"That's why we're here," Castro says. "That's why we're making a real difference."

Castro heads the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine. "He is one of those rare individuals who is able to combine an expertise in individual patient care with a keen sense of the important issues for public health," says Michael Bacharier, Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology, who heads the asthma research program at Washington University.


"Although he's very driven, Mario is also very dedicated to family and attends as many of his kids' sporting events as possible," Bacharier says. "He's proof that you can balance an academic workload with patient care and be a great family." "

Tackling asthma

Raised in Kansas City, Castro also attended medical school there, earning a medical degree through the University of Missouri's B.A./M.D. program, one of the few of its kind in the country. After graduating in 1988, he completed a residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in pulmonary and critical care medicine at the Mayo Clinic.

He came to the School of Medicine in 1994 as a research assistant professor of medicine. In 1998, he earned a master's in public health from Saint Louis University while continuing his work. He was named associate professor in 2002.

Asthma affects about 16 million adults and 7 million children in the United States and has been increasing over the past two decades in spite of the availability of more effective drugs for its treatment. Each year, 4,000-5,000 Americans die from the effects of asthma.

Castro is involved in more than 20 ongoing studies focusing on the genetic, biological and immunological origins of asthma and how to reduce the suffering and death associated with the disease. He also has established an extensive research database that catalogs patients' physiological, clinical, tissue samples and genetic data for use in numerous research projects.

One of his projects, Bronchiectasis in Early Life (BREL), follows a group of 375 children born in 1994 at a Long Island hospital to see if a serious lung infection with respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) early in life is associated with higher rates of asthma.

"We're studying how the children's immune systems respond to the virus," Castro says. "We also are collecting information about the children's environmental exposures, like the kind of dust found in their homes. The project started with a focus on RSV but has spawned two additional projects."

"I've been working with Castro for about 20 years on projects related to childhood asthma, including the BREL study.

"Mario is an expert on the effects of viral infection on the lung, and he is dedicated to the science of how this happens," Bacharier says. "He is well informed and has a lot of good ideas — and he seems to have endless energy. No one else I know in the field tackles asthma from so many angles: basic science, clinical therapy, community interventions and public health.

"Castro works with people experiencing a wide range of asthma symptoms. That could include people who are very disabled by their condition or elite athletes whose asthma limits their performance."

"I've always been helpful to me about taking care of asthma patients that is so matter their initial condition. I can usually make them feel better and allow them to function at a much higher level," Castro says.

"It's like the challenge of working to prevent this disease," he says. "That's one thing that's difficult: We haven't crossed yet, and, in my lifetime, I believe that we can achieve it."

 Mario Castro, M.D., examines Marsha D. Mitchell, a patient in the Center for Clinical Studies. "Mario has become one of the world's leading clinicians and clinical investigators for asthma," says Michael Bacharier, Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology to Washington University in St. Louis. "He is one of those rare individuals who is able to combine an expertise in individual patient care with a keen sense of the important issues for public health."