Washington University Record, October 11, 2007

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A recent study has revealed that A-beta, a protein made in the brain, is a key player in brain cholesterol metabolism and Alzheimer's disease. The study found that when A-beta is made, a small part of the protein also acts as a cholesterol transporter, helping to maintain healthy cholesterol levels in the brain. This finding suggests that cholesterol metabolism in the brain could play a role in the mental decline seen in Alzheimer's patients.

The researchers, led by Guojun Bu, Ph.D., a professor of pediatrics and cell and development biology, and senior author of the journal Neuron, said that cholesterol is important for synaptic function and is an essential component of cell membranes in the brain. They believe that defects in cholesterol metabolism could contribute to the development of Alzheimer's disease.

In the current study, Bu and colleagues found that cholesterol transport and metabolism in the brain were linked, and that the brain needs a high level of cholesterol to function properly. They also noted that high cholesterol levels are associated with an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease.

The study's findings suggest that cholesterol metabolism and Alzheimer's disease may be related, and that strategies to regulate cholesterol levels in the brain could potentially be used to treat or prevent the disease. Further research is needed to fully understand the relationship between cholesterol metabolism and Alzheimer's disease, but these findings offer new avenues for investigation.
Parents Weekend kicks off with classes, tours

By NEIL SCHOENHERR

Parents Weekend 2007 begins Friday, Oct. 12, and runs through Sunday, Oct. 14. Activities include parents joining their sons and daughters for classes, art exhibits, open houses, tours, musical productions and a tailgate party before Saturday's football game.

Registration and check-in for parents begins at 8:30 a.m. Friday in the Women's Building, Formal Lounge.

The day will include open classes, a walking tour of the Central West End, a Cabotia Mounds tour, open houses and the Performing Arts Department in Arts & Sciences' production of the musical "1940s Radio Hour."

On Saturday, Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton will give a talk titled "The Undergraduate Experience" beginning at 10 a.m. in Brown Hall, Room 100. He will discuss the educational experience of the University of Washington's students.

The football game, which begins at noon at Francis Field, will feature the Bears taking on the University Athletic Association rival University of Chicago. Adult ticket sales for students admission is free with a WUSTL ID.

A tailgate party will start at 10:30 a.m. in the Village. Tickets for the tailgate can be purchased online at parents.wustl.edu/weekend.

The rest of the day will include tours of the St. Louis fashion show by students from the Fashion Design Program, swing dancing lessons and dancing, a jazz concert and a hypnotist comedy show.

On Sunday, a walking tour of historic Forest Park will kick off the day at 8:30 a.m. Brunch will follow from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. in Center Court for New Student Center and in The Village.

For more information and a full schedule of activities, contact Danielle Bratise, director of orientation and parents weekend programs, at 955-8356 or weekend@parents.wustl.edu/weekend.

A closer look at eating disorders

"It's not in film: Profiles women in treatment

BY BARBARA BAUMGARTNER

These women suffer as an illness, to examine, the underlying causes of the illness, and socially, and politically.

When parents are asked to identify their children as eating disordered, the Renfrew Center of whom the illness is an eating disorder, the illness is an eating disorder, and the illness is an eating disorder.

"It's important to identify these women as suffering from an illness."

añón the words of filmmaker Lauren Greenfield, who walked into a facility for eating disordered, the Renfrew Center of Coconut Creek, Fla., to shoot the documentary "Thin." Her words were transformed into faces of teenagers and young women struggling to become healthy, both in body and mind. Airing on HBO in November 2006, "Thin" became one of the cable network's most highly rated documentaries.

On Wednesday, Oct. 17, the film will be shown at 7 p.m. in McDowell Hall, Room 162, followed by a panel discussion with health professionals. It will be moderated by Barbara Baumgartner, assistant director and senior lecturer of Women and Gender Studies in Arts & Science, who introduced Greenfield to campus last March as part of the Assembly Series. "It's important to identify these women as suffering from an illness."

Barbara Baumgartner

...the Board has expressed its lasting affection and deep gratitude to Steve Fossett for enriching our lives. We extend our admiration and deep concern to Peggy Cone, in seven young communities by joining student organizations, learning and working with professors and participating in service projects.

Where to send address changes

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Washington University in St. Louis

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS
Landmark research to study development of area kids

The School of Medicine is collaborating with Saint Louis University, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Nursing, Southern Illinois University School of Medicine and St. Louis Barlett Memorial Institute to what will be the largest study of child and human health ever conducted in the United States.

The National Institutes of Health has selected the city of St. Louis and Macoupin County, Ill., as sites for the National Children's Study, an extensive population-based study looking at the health and development of children by following them from before birth to adulthood.

The consortium is one of 22 new study centers added to the National Children's Study, which will follow a representative sample of 100,000 children from before birth to age 21. The study seeks information to prevent and treat some of the nation's most pressing health problems, including autism, birth defects, diabetes, heart disease and obesity. About 250 participants from the city of St. Louis and 250 participants from rural Macoupin County are expected to enroll for each of four years starting in 2009.

"The National Children's Study is an investment in the future," said Terry Levison, Ph.D., lead investigator of the St. Louis and Macoupin County study sites and chairman of the Department of Community Health at St. Louis University School of Public Health. "Examining the health of our children is critically important to the entire community, whether you are a parent, grandparent or teacher. What we find could be a potential gold mine of data for scientists who are studying what causes diseases in children."

Michael Devlin, M.D., associate professor of pediatrics and biostatistics at Washington University, is co-principal investigator of the St. Louis-Macoupin study. "This project offers the chance to put the St. Louis area and Macoupin County on the forefront of research into maternal and child health," Levison said. "It also fosters collaboration between the region's key health care institutions."

Researchers will gather data from homes and health care settings, including a $1.2 million dollars from the National Institutes of Health and a number of biological, chemical, environmental, psychological and psychosocial factors. The money from the grant will be spent hiring data collectors for both sites.

The study begins either prior to conception or within two weeks of birth. It will include the pregnancy and a five-year contract from the National Institutes of Health to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The cost of the research is estimated at $30 billion over the next 25 years.

The outcome of pregnancies, such as preterm delivery, will be monitored. Other outcome markers to be studied include asthma, birth defects, diabetes, injury, mental health and physical and mental development disorders.

From that repository of information, scientists can look at how certain factors alone or in combination with others affect pregnancy outcomes, child development and health and the likelihood an adult will develop certain diseases.

New technologies add precision to prostate cancer treatments

By GYEN EGISON

A extra degree of precision will be added to radiation treatments for prostate cancer at the School of Medicine following the installation of two new technologies in the Department of Radiation Oncology.

The move was led by Jeff Michalski, M.D., professor of radiation oncology and affiliated with the Site- man Cancer Center.

One of the technologies aids physicians during placement of radiation seeds into the prostate, and the other aids in targeting external-beam radiation. Both technologies will increase radiation treatment accuracy to better eradicate tumors and avoid injury to nearby tissues.

For more than 15 years, radiation oncologists have been using ultrasound scans to measure the size and shape of the prostate while the patient is in the operating room to determine where to insert radioactive pellets or seeds for treatment of prostate cancer. This type of specialized treatment is called brachytherapy.

But until now, the ultrasound images used to create these scans have been linked directly to the treatment-planning computer. That meant some of the changes in the prostate shape or position during treatment couldn't be taken into account, leading to less-than-optimal seed placement.

"Through a collaboration with two companies, Elekta Oncology Systems and Varian Medical Systems, we've integrated a unique ultrasound system with three-dimensional radiation planning into our treatment strategy," Michalski said. "It has a stationary probe with a mobile transducer inside it, and the probe communicates directly with the treatment-planning computer. That allows us to see in real time where the radioactive seeds are placed during the treatment to reduce the level of uncertainty."

A second advance allows real-time assessment and positioning correction during external-beam radiation therapy. Developed by a company called Calypso Medical Technologies, this system employs beacons that transmit radio signals to a transceiver placed near the prostate. The beacons report the position of the prostate about 10 times per second during radiation treatment.

"These steps represent the scientific "gold standards" for linking a microorganism to disease," Wang said, but as technology has improved, it has become possible for scientists to identify viruses before culturing them, the steps haven't always followed. For example, scientists have long accepted hepatitis C virus, a virus thought to cause liver disease, but they only successfully grew it in a laboratory two years ago.

The research appeared in Public Library of Science Pathogens. It was supported in part by a grant from the Midwest Region al Center of Excellence for Bio-defense and Emerging Infectious Disease Research, a National Institutes of Health institutional research center anchored at the University.

Working with Saint Louis University, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Medicine, the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, Australia, provided samples from patients with respiratory infections. Despite an exhaustive battery of tests, Australian researchers had not been able to link a virus to any known pathogens.

The Calypso system, a technique called high-thoroughput DNA sequencing to study patient's nasal secretions, allow the virus, the virus was identified using all genetic material from the secretions and randomly reading the coding of that material. The sample was then prepped...
What do you believe? Assembly Series Wants to know

'This I Believe: The State of Spiritual Life at Washington University'

By Barbara Rea

I am given time, thousands of people from all walks of life converge at Washington University to discuss their own set of beliefs — religious, secular and anything in between.

Dr. Punit Jain, Cannon Design, Green Campus (webevent.wustl.edu) and the Rev. Gary Braun, Will contribute to a Student Life op-ed article for the Oct. 12 issue and encourage others to contribute their submissions, either before the forum so they can be included in future discussions, or at the forum. "We invite all thoughts and beliefs to be heard," Orlow said. "A belief system can be completely devoid of any spiritual considerations or deeply rooted, and it can create an honest dialogue." As Orlow and Braun deliver their comments, Heath-Carpentier will contribute comments and questions from the audience.

Orlow is the Rabbi of St. Louis Hillel, an organization that seeks to maximize opportunities for Jewish students to explore, celebrate and sanctify life in a Jewish context.

Located in the Alvin- Bronstein Center, St. Louis, since 1991, CSC, located at 6532 Forsyth Blvd., serves as a community not only for Catholic forma
tion but also for people from all backgrounds. The center is open to students of all faiths as a career development spe
cialist, Heath-Carpentier is influential in advising, software development and teaching religious studies, students and women's studies at the university. A career development specialist's leve


11 a.m. Finance Research Program Seminar Series. "Secular Trends in U.S. Alcohol Consumption: What You Need to Know?" John Y. McSween, research prof. of psychology, Farned Learning & Teaching Center, Rm. 213 A&B.


4 p.m. Physics Colloquium. "Combining a Model System to Explore Complex Multitudes." Charles Newcomb, theoretical physicist, Los Alamos National Laboratories. (3 p.m. in Crow Hall, Rm. 240, 935-6276.


5:30 p.m. Computer Science Center Seminar. "Combining Dark Energy and the Expansion History of the Universe." Christopher Hirata, research assoc. prof. of physics, J.B. McMillen Lab., Rm. 320, 935-6276.

6 p.m. Finance Research Program Seminar Series. "Philosophical Dilemmas and the Quantum Carnal Principle." Paul Wight, research prof. of philosophy, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. (Crow Hall, Rm. 240, or at the forum.)

6:30 p.m. Computer Science Center Seminar. "The Supercritical Fluids Program." John H. Carpenter, assoc. prof. of chemistry, J.B. McMillen Lab., Rm. 320, 935-6276.

7 p.m. Physics Colloquium. "Understanding Dark Energy and the Expansion History of the Universe." Christopher Hirata, research assoc. prof. of physics, J.B. McMillen Lab., Rm. 320, 935-6276.

7:30 p.m. Biology Colloquium. "Interacting Dark Energy and the Underground: Specification of L2 Reading." Tom Cobb, prof. of linguistics, U. of Quebec in Montreal. (3 p.m. in Rm. 213 A&B.)

8 p.m. Physical Science Saturdays Lecture Series. "How Does the Brain Work?" Our Journey to Gain Insight Into the Functioning of the Brain." Ralf W. R. Weiss, assoc. prof. of applied linguistics, U. of Quebec in Montreal. (3 p.m. in Rm. 213 A&B.)
Husband-and-wife team to lead master class in Indian dance Oct. 14

Sopranino Jennifer Jakob will perform as a sopranino "Liederbund" for the Department of Music in Arts & Sciences at 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 14, in Graham Chapel.

The program will open with nine songs from Hugo Wolf's "Die hjibride" (1892) followed by three songs by Johannes Brahms. The program will then continue with four "Mignon songs"—based on the character from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship" (1795)—which include compositions by Wolf, Franz Schubert and Robert Schumann. Concluding the program are four songs by Richard Strauss.

Jakob, a native of Kempten, Germany, earned her bachelor's degree from Oberlin College, where she won the Senior Concerto Competition and was chosen to perform in the Dartenberg Festival performing a set of Strus Lieber. She currently is working toward her master's degree at Indiana University and in February will sing the role of Viola Billingsley in the collegiate premiere of William Bolcom's "A Wedding" (2004).

In 2005, Jakob debuted in Italy as Clorinda Rosini's "La Cambiale di Matrimonio" (1810) and was chosen to sing for the famous Italian soprano Mirella Freni. For the past two summers, she has been a Graduate Young Artist for Opera Theatre of the Ozarks. Recently, she has won a presti- gious Sara Tucker Study Grant, sponsored by the Sara Tucker Music Foundation in New York. The concert is free and open to the public. For more information, call 935-5566.

Thielor Eric Santner to give lecture

Theorist Eric Santner, visiting professor of the Department of English in Arts & Sciences, will speak on "The People's Two Bodies: Modernity and the Endgame of Sovereignty" at 4 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 11.

The lecture, sponsored by the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, University Club of St. Louis, the German Literature and Psychology of Everyday Life: Re- conceptions from the Koret Jewish Book Association and the Rene Wellek Association, is free and open to the public.

Eric Santner was born in Germany and has written numerous other books, most recently "On Creatures (2006)", and also the author, with Slawo Zink and Kenneth Reinhard, of "The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theo- ry" (2005), a major reconsideration of the ethics of Lacan and Levinas.

The lecture, sponsored by the Department of English in Arts & Sciences, the German Literature and Psychology of Everyday Life: Reconceptions from the Koret Jewish Book Association and the Rene Wellek Association, is free and open to the public. For more information, call 935-3190.

On Stage

Men's basketball ranked No. 1

Fresh off its first appearance in the NCAA Final Four, the Washington University men's basketball team has earned a No. 1 ranking in the USA Today/Sports Illustrated preseason poll for the 1995 season, 6-1. The Bears suffered first loss 1994.

The defense forced five turnovers in the 1995 season 6-1. The defense forced five turnovers in the 1995 season 6-1.

Football improves record to 5-1

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Roever Lectures to explain famous mathematical problem Sometimes a sphere is just a sphere

By TONY FITZPATRICK

One of the most famous problems in mathematics was posed by Russian mathematician Vladimir V. Poicare (1854-1912) and has been a thorn in the side of mathematicians ever since. The conjecture, named after Poincare, proposes that a three-dimensional manifold that is homeomorphic to the sphere is the sphere. Of course, in three dimensions, any space that has the geometry of a sphere actually is a sphere.

The problem gained popularity in 1904, but it has only been in the past four years that a solution to the conjecture has survived the scrutiny of the academic community.

"It will be a special event and the chance of a lifetime to have two of the world's experts in the subject do their best to explain the Poincare Conjecture," Roever said.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the introduction of the Poincare Conjecture, and Roever has dedicated an entire evening to explain the intricacies of the problem.

If you have ever had a brush with topology, you should know this is a difficult problem.

"Cholesterol metabolism in the brain is an understudied area, and our findings could inspire Alzheimer's researchers to look further into the role of the cholesterol pathway," said Bou.

As a result of our recent findings, we can now test our hypothesis that manipulating the cholesterol pathway in the brain could help alleviate Alzheimer's symptoms.

The lectures open with a tea Oct. 19 at 2:30 p.m. in CApps Hall. The panel will move to Leta Hall, where Morgan delivers the first lecture on the Poincare Conjecture and the Geometrization Conjecture at 3:30 p.m. Then gives the second lecture, "Singularity Development in Finite Time" at 4 p.m. On Oct. 26, Morgan starts off with "Ricci Flow With Surgery" at 9 a.m. and "Torsion Fields" at 11 a.m.

The William H. Roever Lectures-f- in Geometry were established in 1982 by his son William A. and Frederick H. Roever and members of their family. It is a lasting memorial to their father and is a continuing source of strength for the mathematical department, which owns so much to his legacy.

After earning a bachelor's in mechanical engineering from the University of Washington, Roever earned a PhD in mathematics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he spent the entire career, here, serving as chairman of the Department of Mathematics and Astronomy from 1952 until his retirement in 1984.

Roever published over 40 articles and several books, and is widely regarded as a specialist in geometry.

He served on the council of the American Mathematical Society and on the editorial board of the Mathematical Association of America, and was a member of the Mathematical Societies of Italy and Germany.

The topic: The solution of the Poincare Conjecture.

Participants: Morgan.

Location: CApps Hall.

This year, the first time, 61 Howard Hughes Medical Institute scholars, who completed their studies in the life sciences, will present at the symposium. Institute Retired Galen Galen Center.

The symposium will give me the opportunity to share my original research with this special audience.

"I want other undergraduates to know that research doesn't only involves people who are interested in investigating something which you are passionate, you can make that happen with University support," he said. The symposium has come a long way in a short time, starting with just 15 participants in spring 2005.

"I think we are not too far from having a true research year on the Danforth Campus devoted entirely to undergraduate research," Biggs said. "It's just amazing what scientists are doing here. We've excited to see everyone get involved, and we're excited to see everyone can see our students' great accomplishments."

The William H. Roever Lectures are free and open to the public.

A theater effective tool for social change that the effects of sexual violence on African-American women after the Civil War and the today.

Symposium showcases undergraduate research

By NEAL SCOBIE

The symposium is a full-blown research project, and it can make that happen with University support," he said. The symposium has come a long way in a short time, starting with just 15 participants in spring 2005.

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A theater effective tool for social change that the effects of sexual violence on African-American women after the Civil War and the today.
Introducing new faculty members

Elizabeth Bogwardt, J.D., Ph.D., joins the Department of History in Arts & Sciences as associate professor. The holder of both a doctorate in History from Brown University (1992) and a juris doctorate from Harvard University (1995), she began the 2006-07 academic year as a visiting scholar at the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History at Harvard. From 2002-06, she was assistant professor and then associate professor of history at the University of Utah. Her teaching and research focus on the political and legal dimensions to U.S. history, the history of human rights regimes and endeavors, international relations and comparative constitutional history. She received a Fulbright Distinguished Lecture fellowship for research and teaching at the University of Heidelberg that will begin in spring 2008.

Daniel Bornstain, Ph.D., joins the Department of History in Arts & Sciences as the Stella K. Dreyfus Professor of Catholic Studies with a joint appointment in religious studies. Bornstain’s research focuses on religious life in late-medieval and Renaissance Italy, on varieties of religious practice, the role of women and Catholic institutions and, more broadly, on religion and civic activity. He is a recipient of a doctoral fellowship from the University of Chicago in 1983 and the University of the Michigan’s Center for fellows and three years at the University of California, Berkeley, before joining the history department at Texas A&M University as assistant professor in 1999. He was promoted to associate professor with tenure at Texas A&M in 1994 and to full professor in 2004.

Gerdi de Geest, J.D., Ph.D., joins the School of Law as professor of law and assistant professor of law in 1994. He received his Ph.D. from the Erasmus University in 1993, as a professor of law and economics at the University of Freiburg in the Netherlands. Past president of the European Association of Law and Economics, he is a member of the European Group on an Integrat- ed Contract Law and of the Economic Policy of the Common Principles of Eu- ropean Contract Law. De Geest has published numerous books and articles in the fields of economic analysis of contract law, tort law and compa- rative law.

Michael Lewis, Ph.D., joins the Olin Business School as assistant professor of marketing. Lewis focuses his research on topics in sports marketing, customer relationship management, revenue management and their role in linear and dynamic pricing. He earned his doctorate from the Broader College of Management at Northwestern University, where he was an NSF-Alden G. Clayton Dis- tinguished Postdoctoral Fellow. Lewis also spent three years working for Northwest Air- lines, and he taught at the University of Florida’s War- rington College of Business Administration before coming to the University.

Anne Newman, Ph.D., joins the Department of Education in Arts & Sciences as assistant professor. She earned her doctorate from Stanford University in 2007 and a bachelor’s degree from the University of Chicago. Her teaching and research interests lie at the intersection of political theory and educational policy, and in the role of rights discourse and political activism in advancing educational reform in urban communities.

Joan B. Pena, Ph.D., joins the Department of Infectious Disease in the School of Public Health as assistant professor. He earned a master’s degree in social work from New York University and a doctorate in social work from Columbia University. Before joining the University, Pena served as a senior instructor and postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Rochester Medical Center. Pena’s professional interests focus on Hispanic adolescents, prevention of risk behavior in adolescents and accultur- ation-immigration status.

Philip Seowich, Ph.D., joins the Department of Performing Arts and the Program in Film and Media Studies in Arts & Sciences as assistant professor. He earned his doctorate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in communication arts-media and cultural studies in 2007, his master’s at the University of Texas at Austin in 1996 and his bachelor’s degree at the University of Austin in 1993. For the past year, he has been a lecturer at the University in film-media studies, where he has focused on the history of electronic media, media cultures and race and ethnicity on American television. His research focuses on the history of the concept of “quality” as it was used toward various ends in the early development of television in the United States.

John Turd-Escobar, Ph.D., joins the Department of Music in Arts & Sciences as assistant professor. He earned his doctorate from Yale University and a bachelor’s degree from Rutgers University. From 2004-07, he was assistant professor of music theory at the University of Georgia. His primary field of research is the late Italian madrigal. Secondary areas of interest include 19th-century chromaticism, classical form, the music of Antonin Dvorak, and broader issues in music and meaning. He has presented his work at regional and national conferences and is currently working on a series of articles on the music of Carlo Gesualdo. He also is preparing a book on chromaticism in the late 16th-century madrigal.

Kathryn R. Wrighton, Ph.D., joins the Department of Biology in Arts & Sciences as assistant professor. She earned her doctorate in molecular biology from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1999, and a master’s degree at the University of Texas at Austin in 1993. For the past six years, she has been a assistant professor at the University of California, San Francisco, where she has been a member of the Program in Molecular and Cellular Biology and the Program in Computational Biology. Wrighton’s research focuses on understanding the role of the ribosome in translation and the role of the ribosome in translation in the regulation of gene expression. She has been a recipient of a National Science Foundation Career Award and a Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences. Wrighton is currently a member of the Department of Molecular Biology at the University of California, San Francisco, where she has been a assistant professor since 2004.

Legomsky serving as research fellow in Singapore

BY JESSICA MARTIN

Stephen H. Legomsky, J.D., Ph.D., an associate professor of law at the University, is serving a six-month appointment as a visiting senior research fellow at the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore. In addition to writing an article about the implications of asylum policy in the United States, Legomsky currently is completing a chapter for a book on comparative asylum policy and the role of law. Cambridge University Press will publish the book in 2008. Legomsky’s research examines the link between U.S. asylum policy and the role of law. In September, he will give lectures at three Korean universities before spending one week in South Korea as the guest of the South Korean Ministry of Justice. The minister has invited Legomsky to advise him and his staff on possible immigration reform legislation.

BY NEIL SCHONHERR

Jeff Carnegie, Ph.D., director of the Center for Career and Educational Advancement for students, was presented with the 2007 Richard Clove Professional Award at the University of Missouri College of Arts & Sciences Association academic awards ceremony Sept. 24. "It's a great honor, as well as quite humbling, to be recognized by your peers," Carnegie said. "It makes it that much more satisfying to work with and having great re- spect for Dick Clove and all the models in our effort to provide educational and career services to students and faculty. It is a role I treasure to share with students and faculty." Carnegie said.

BY WANDA TERRY

Wanda Lee Terry, who also went on to work in the administrative aide in the De- partment of Music in Arts & Sciences from 1989-2004, died Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2007, in St. Louis. She was 69.

New professorship in biology

BY JESSICA MARTIN

Himadri B. Paskri, Ph.D., receives a model from Chancellor Mark B. Wrighton signifying his appointment as the George William and Irene Koechig Freiberg Professor of Biology in Arts & Sciences Oct. 2 in a ceremony at Holmes Lounge. Paskri was introduced by Edward B. Mcllveen, Ph.D. (M.R., executive vice chancellor, dean of Arts & Sciences and the Barbara and David Thomas Distinguished Professor in Arts & Sciences. Paskri, who also has an appointment as professor of energy in the School of Engineering, directs the University’s new initiative called the International Center for Advanced Renewable Energy and Sustainability (i-CARES). The professorship honors a distinguished faculty member in biology who has demonstrat- ed leadership in research and teaching. It was established in 1983 by George Freiberg, an entrepreneur-executive who received a doctorate in microbiology from Washington University in 1917. Irene Koechig Freiberg received two degrees in Arts & Sciences from the University and taught at the School of Medicine from the 1920s through the 1950s.
Growing up in northeastern Ohio, Thomas Ferkol Jr., M.D., lived among the Old Order Amish communities. When he was young, his father taught physical education and art in a small school system in Geauga County, where many of his students were Amish. As an unexpected twist, Ferkol, a pediatric physician-scientist working on cystic fibrosis and other lung diseases in children, has found through patients he treats at St. Louis Children’s Hospital that a rare genetic lung disease is common in Amish and Mennonite populations.

Ferkol, director of the Division of Pediatric Allergy and Pulmonary Medicine and associate professor of pediatrics and of cell biology and physiology, is one of a handful of pediatric pulmonologists in the country who study primary ciliary dyskinesia (PCD), an unusual cause of persistent wheezing and coughing in children. Estimated to occur in 1 of every 12,000 births, PCD is a genetic disorder that results in chronic infections of the respiratory tract. Children are tiny, beating hair-like structures on the airway surface that protect the lung from inhaled fluids, mucus and inhaled particulate matter.

Ferkol: a teacher, researcher and ‘clinician at heart’

by Beth Miller

The Ferkol family at their home. (From left) Sandra, Thomas, Katherine, 11, and Thomas, 14.

Washington People

Ferkol is known to his team as enthusiastically smart, funny and all around quick-witted. Ferkol is a patient teacher, making a complex disease understandable for patients and their families. "What’s been very important is to help children and their families understand the clinical manifestations and genetics of PCD in their community," he says. "The parents all want to know how best to treat this disease in their children. It’s assumed that since we’re dealing with a large consanguineous family that we’d be talking about a single gene and a single PCD-causing mutation, but, boy, was I wrong. The genetics are more complex than I had expected.

Ferkol was recruited to the Department of Pediatrics in 2000 as director of the Cystic Fibrosis Center at the School of Medicine and St. Louis Children’s Hospital by Alan L. Schwartz, Ph.D., M.D., the Harrist B. Spothoff Professor and head of pediatrics. Tom is a gifted clinician, committed educator and leading investigator in the biology of cystic fibrosis and related disorders," Schwartz says. "Tom has brought the Cystic Fibrosis Center to a nationally prominent position. His appointment last fall as division director gives him the opportunity to continue to advance. We look forward to the many years ahead under his leadership." While Ferkol remains co-director of the Cystic Fibrosis Center with Cammy Cannon, Ph.D., M.D., and is very involved in the care of children with the disease, his research focus has increasingly shifted toward clinical collaborations.

Passion for research

Ferkol said he has been interested in cystic fibrosis research since college. While an undergraduate at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ferkol worked in a lab with researchers studying the role of Pseudomonas aeruginosa infections in cystic fibrosis patients. “I was convinced then that I wanted to have a career in cystic fibrosis,” Ferkol says. “But my interest began to shift from infectious disease to pulmonary medicine shortly after I arrived at the University of North Carolina for my residency.” Tom Bean, M.D., the chairman of pediatrics then, and Margaret Leigh, M.D., gradu- ually convinced me that if I wanted to study cystic fibrosis, I should be a pulmonologist.

“Ferkol’s career, research and passion for organizations. Tom’s bright, creative mind, matched with his equally quick wit, make all interactions with him informative, fun and memorable.”

Thomas Ferkol Jr.

Education: Case Western Reserve University, B.A., 1981; The Ohio State University College of Medicine, M.D., 1985.

Family: Wife Sandra; son Thomas, 14.

Hobbies: Spending time with family, sports.

Travel: Last spring, the family went to Greece during spring break at his son’s request. “I’ve always enjoyed ancient history, and I had never been to Greece, so that didn’t need much convincing,” Ferkol says. “The trip gave me an opportunity to revisit Greek mythology and an place that I only knew through my imagination.”

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