

FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

NEWSLETTER May 2006

Inaugural Lecture

"How the brain-mind works: Lessons from the anxiety disorders."

Professor Dan Stein. 17h30 Wednesday 10th May, Learning Centre
RSVP [catering]: ems@ched.uct.ac.za



information processing in the nervous system." Dr. Wood qualified in medicine at UCT, and is now based at Oxford University in the departments of anatomy and genetics. His talk concerned the several types of recently recognised "small RNA" molecules and their functions, and the application of RNA interference technology as a potential treatment for disorders of muscle and nerve. The day was well attended, and the neuroscience community got to know and interact with each in a way that will stimulate collaborative research work.

Cardiology at the limits

8th annual Cardiology at the Limits meeting, 2006.



The Annual Cardiology at the Limits meeting has by now become somewhat of a legend. Opened by our Dean, Professor Marian Jacobs, who pointed to the long history of collaboration between the Hatter Institutes of the University of Cape Town and University College London, based on a lifelong friendship between the Directors, namely Lionel Opie and Derek Yellon.

Then followed Professor Mike Spyer, Dean of Medicine at University College London, who gave his blessing to the meeting. The major opening event was the talk by **Richard Horton**, the dynamic editor of *The Lancet*, on "How to promote the worldwide fight against heart disease". His key suggestion was the necessity for personal and professional contact between the developed world of cardiology as in the UK and the developing world. At every annual meeting, there are eight cardiologists invited to speak on highly selected and relevant topics of cardiology, which they are expected to "take to the Limits". From these speakers are selected the Hatter Lecturer as someone who has made an outstanding contribution to cardiology. This year the Hatter Lecturer was Dr Nannette Wenger from Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA. She has been noteworthy for fighting for recognition of the unpleasant fact that coronary heart disease is increasing in women to such an extent that 2-3 times more women die from heart disease than from breast cancer. The number of heart attacks in women has now exceeded that in men in the USA, at least in part because of the longer lifespan of women.

This meeting attracts about 60 doctors from the UK, upwards of 150 from South Africa and this year, for the first time, doctors from Central and West Africa. Others come from Europe. It is recognised by both the British Cardiac Society and the South African Heart Association as providing an important educational programme. Thus this year the British Heart Foundation Lecture was given by Professor Bongani Mayosi on "Cardiomyopathy in Africa – heredity versus environment".

The pre-dinner speaker was Professor Tim Noakes, his topic being "Endurance beyond the limits". He showed how human persistence, effort and training had improved performance in many challenging events, but we were probably near peak performance and further improvement would only come (alas) from "better doping" or "genetic modification". Thus while cardiology seems not to have reached the limits, the human frame is close to those limits.

Neuroscience Research Day



On Friday 31st March the first "UCT Neuroscience Research Day" was held in the Wolfson Pavilion. There were 27 scientific presentations from a wide variety of departments and units, including human biology, sports science, physiology, human genetics, psychology, electrical engineering, paediatrics, medical virology, MRC/UCT medical imaging unit, neurosurgery and neurology.

The keynote address was given by **Dr. Matthew Wood** on "RNA and

New UCT Executive Director: Development and Alumni Affairs

Dr Jim McNamara has been appointed to the position of Executive Director: Development and Alumni Affairs. Dr McNamara is Deputy Registrar and Project Director of the Integrated Student Information System (ISIS) Project. He has extensive experience in university administration, including alumni relations, business management, and sales and marketing.



Flu Vaccine

Flu vaccine for 2006 is now available. While Groote Schuur Hospital provides the vaccine to its staff through the staff clinic at a cost, the Faculty is unable to provide such a service. Staff members will have to obtain the injection from their pharmacist. The vaccine composition 2006 is: A/New Caledonia/20/99, A/California/7/2004, B/Malaysia/2506/2004. The recipients should be the chronically sick, the immuno-compromised, and the elderly.



Two more genes found in sporting puzzle (Monday Paper)

It's, like, the holy grail of sports science. Scientists have long held that athletic ability comes from more than just 20 push-ups in the morning and eating your veggies. And in this the age where the Human Genome Project has become a household name - even if we don't sometimes get what the fuss is all about - it's no



surprise then that they've turned to the Petri dish for answers. "There are certain things that we can do to improve our athletic performance, like train properly and eat properly," says **Dr Malcolm Collins** of the Medical Research Council (MRC)/UCT Research Unit for Exercise Science and Sports Medicine (ESSM). "But there are also certain things we're just born with." Genes. Now Collins and colleagues at UCT, the Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics as well as the Cardiovascular Diagnostic Centre, also in Cyprus, believe they've identified two more genes that can explain the "raw talent" of some endurance athletes. In their study on competitors in the 2000 and 2001 South African Ironman Triathlons, the group has found that the bradykinin β 2 receptor (*BDKRB2*) and the nitric oxide synthase 3 (*NOS3*) genes are associated with athletic performance. . But don't start calling for genetic tests to sort the hares from the tortoises just yet, cautions Collins. Genes may not be the only things that make a podium finisher. "It's a big puzzle, and we're just identifying single pieces of the puzzle," he says.



Dean's Corner

In the University's governance arrangements, the Faculty Board is the highest decision-making body in the Faculty. It is responsible to the Senate for managing research and teaching, and related degrees, curricula and examinations, and it is charged with making proposals to Senate for rules and requirements in this regard. Among other aspects of its terms of reference, it also has the important task of advising the Dean on policy for resource allocation.

Our Faculty Board has about 180 members, and in the past few years, the challenge has been to attract members in sufficient numbers to even secure a quorum at the meetings, which are held. In an attempt to address this difficulty, the Faculty Board structure has been revitalised to ensure that each meeting focuses on a particular aspect of our core activities. The last meeting focused on human resource matters, and the meeting on 9 May will place a spotlight on research.

The Faculty Board represents the collective wisdom and experience of the Faculty and while minutes of its meetings are available, its members should also provide a channel for opinions of, and feedback to, those colleagues who are not members. I value the guidance from the body of the Faculty, therefore encourage all members of the Faculty to engage with the agenda of the Board, and make your voice heard – at the Board meeting, or through a Faculty Board member. Your opinion is valuable, and the structure makes provision for you to be heard, and taken seriously.

Marian Jacobs

Ivan Toms



President Thabo Mbeki has bestowed one of the highest national orders, the Order of the Baobab, on Dr Ivan Toms, the Director City Health in the City of Cape Town, and 1976 UCT Mb ChB graduate. This is one of the highest awards which a country bestows on its citizens and eminent foreign nationals. In bestowing the Order on Dr Toms, the President recognised his outstanding contribution to the struggle against apartheid and sexual

discrimination. In 1980 he started the Empilisweni SACLA clinic in Crossroads as the only health service for the Crossroads community. During the eighties he was one of the active figures in the UDF and the End Conscription Campaign. He was jailed for nine months for refusing to do a military service camp in 1988. Dr Toms is an advocate for gay and lesbian rights, and the need to protect citizens from being discriminated on the grounds of sexual orientation, which is now entrenched in the country's Constitution.

.Quotes

Dermatology: Vincent Joseph Derbes, 1981

I have long had the idea that God created psoriasis and warts to teach dermatologists the merits of humility. Derbes, Vincent J. Psoriasis. *Ration Drug Ther.* 981; 15:1-6.

Psychiatry: Richard Hunter, 1972

Psychiatrists do not diagnose their patients like other doctors do. They discard four of their senses and literally play it by ear. It is the no-touch technique adapted to new purpose.... Presenting symptoms are elevated to the status of a disease like varieties of fever were in the eighteenth century. The pharmaceutical industry provides corresponding antidotes and reinforces the illusion.

[Reprinted in *Proc R Soc Med.* 1973; 66:359.]

Anatomy: Mark Twain, 1867

Anatomists see no beautiful women in all their lives, but only a ghastly sack of bones with Latin names to them, and a network of nerves and muscles and tissues inflamed by disease.

[As cited in Mencken HL (ed), *A New Dictionary of Quotations*, p. 39 (q.v.).]

NSTF Science and Technology Awards finalists

The NSTF Science and Technology Awards for 2005 are due to be presented on the 19th of May 2006. The State President's office, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and other key stakeholders have supported this high-profile event, being held for the eighth year in succession. Our Tim Noakes has been put forward as a candidate. We wish him the best of luck.

In the category A: over a lifetime

Dr Marthinus S Basson - Exec Dir BKS (Pty) Ltd, Pretoria
Dr F (Frikkie) C Botha - Director, SA Sugarcane Research Institute, Mount Edgecombe Natal

Prof George M Branch - Dept Zoology UCT, Cape Town
Prof Johann R E Jutjeharms - Prof of Ocean Climatology, UCT, Cape Town

Prof Terence S McCarthy - School of Geosciences, Wits,
Dr Khotse Mokhele - President and CEO NRF

Prof Timothy D Noakes - UCT and Sports Science Institute
Prof Douglas E Rawlings - HoD Dept of Microbiology, US

Who was Barnard Fuller?

The Administrative Offices and the Office of the Dean is called the "Barnard Fuller Building". E Barnard Fuller played a key role in developing UCT's medical-school facilities when the University was still known as the South African College and, later, when it became known as the University of Cape Town. Educated at the South African College, he went on to Edinburgh University, graduating with first-class honours in 1891, returning to Cape Town in 1892. Here he ran a private practice, served as the city's first medical officer of health and helped grow the South African College's medical school, campaigning the Union government to fund chairs of anatomy, physiology and other fields from 1910. Fuller was also outspoken on the subject of gender equality, protesting against the exclusion of women from debates on the Girls' Protection Bill in 1916. The same year, he read a paper before the Women's Enfranchisement League, strongly supporting his wife, Maria Emmeline Buchanan, in the promotion of women's rights. For his work, UCT conferred an honorary doctorate of laws on him in 1940.



In 1919, by which time the institute was known as UCT, Fuller was appointed a part-time lecturer in clinical surgery at the medical school. He held this post until 1930, during which time he did much to develop the medical school. He also became president of the convocation and chairman of the senate and of the university council.

Quiz for Book token

Answer for April: Three golden rings are the coat of arms of van Riebeeck, and the snake entwined staff is that of Hermes, and has become to represent the medical profession. Alix Klein, Dept Public Health & Family Medicine got the correct answer, and an Exclusive Books token.



Question for May:

Who's anatomy class is this, who painted it, and what has been changed? Answer to: dmdent@uctgsh1.uct.ac.za



