As we wrap up another fiscal year at UCLA Health System, it is time for us to reflect proudly on this year’s accomplishments and to celebrate our successes in the Clinical Laboratory and Pathology Department. I would like to take this special opportunity to thank every one of you for all your hard work during this past year.

Fiscal year 2010 began with the Ackerman Blood Donor Program in full swing. Opened in April of 2009, the Donor Center has produced over 7,000 units of whole blood, red cells, and platelepheresis for our patients as of May, year to date. Combined with the collections from the Gayley Donor Center and the mobile drives, the entire program collected over 37,000 products.

In Microbiology, new testing included the successful implementation of in-house BK Virus testing and the Respiratory Virus Panel (RVP). RVP proved to be a highly demanded test by comparison to H1N1. In light of a moderate flu season this past year, the volume of RVP testing is nearly two times the initial projection. Again, many thanks to the Microbiology staff for working so hard to keep up with this demand.

In Cytogenetics, volume from Genoptix continues to exceed projections. Despite equipment, staffing, and space constraints, volume is 18% higher than originally projected. I would like to thank the entire Cytogenetics staff for going above and beyond our expectations.

In Chemistry, bringing Vitamin D and ACTH in-house has improved testing access and patient care. Testing volume for Vitamin D nearly doubled the initial projections. Our staff is to be commended for such great achievements, especially amidst the current decompression issues in the main laboratory at RRUCLAMC!

A new Patient Service Center at Westlake Village joined the group of satellite draw locations in October, 2009. Along with the locations on Parkside and 100 Medical Plaza, the three sites collected over 110,000 requisitions as of April, year to date. Physicians at Westlake Village tell us they have never been more thrilled at the level of service their patients are getting at our draw stations! Special thanks go to all the staff at our satellite draw locations and the Specimen Processing area at 200 Medical Plaza for promoting our services and maintaining world-class C-1-CARE standards.

A special thanks also goes out to the staff in Anatomic Pathology for their ambition in new test development. Their main areas of development and expansion have included bringing up the new Orphan Disease and Biomarker Innovations Laboratories, as well as opening the Fine Needle Aspiration (FNA) Clinic in 100 Med Plaza.

The continual internal volume growth and additional new testing certainly create challenges and hardships for everyone in the Clinical Laboratory. Recognizing the urgent need to come up with adequate solutions, we are working diligently with Facilities and Capital Programs to address many of the space decompression issues we are currently experiencing. Since the approvals were obtained from the State recently, work has begun in the main laboratory at RRUCLAMC, Blood Processing area at CHS, and in the 200 Medical Plaza Specimen Processing areas. In addition, we are working with Human Resources and other local community colleges in the development of a career ladder and an expanded training program to address our staffing needs.

Last but not least, we are building the foundation for our long-term strategy for program growth. These components include the identification of an additional lab space for expansion, a front end web portal (4Medica) for electronic order entry and results reporting, a partnership with an outside billing agent (GBB) to do our non-UCLA patient billing, a market competitive fee schedule, and collaboration with other hospitals and UC campuses on new business ventures.

"I would like to take this special opportunity to thank every one of you for all your hard work during this past year."
Great news! Pathology and Laboratory Medicine has been given the honor, opportunity, and responsibility of beautifying the CHS 1-3 Corridor. As many of you may recall, it was previously lined with pictures of past Medical School graduating classes. These historical photos have now been moved to the 1-7 corridor, leaving behind a “blank canvas” upon which Pathology will showcase the creations of the multi-talented individuals of our department.

We invite EVERYONE in the department to participate in this exciting project: staff, faculty, students, volunteers, emeritus, and retirees. As Dr. Braun mentioned in our first Pathology and Lab Medicine Newsletter, we have many department neighborhoods filled with dedicated, imaginative, and creative people. “So, how do we know each other, and what is going on”? This new project is another opportunity to showcase the richness and meaning of the work we do, as well as provide a glimpse beyond the typical work perspective, into the multi-dimensionality of our richly diverse and talented community members! It is an opportunity for you to share what is meaningful to you as an individual.

The Vision:
- To highlight the creative aspects of the people of our department by displaying their works on the walls of the 1-3 corridor: paintings, photographs, prose, sculpture, etc.
- We have room for about ten 6’ x 3’ display cases (must meet fire code regulations) in which we can display large pieces or multiple smaller items.
- Possibly make one display case capable of playing music. (If anyone has expertise in this area, please let Sharon know.)
- Include a picture and bio of the contributor next to the piece, with a short description of their background, materials used, inspiration, etc.
- Rotate the pieces quarterly. (Dr. Braun has suggested that we aim for one “outside the box” display each quarter.)
- Maybe have a contest (with awards?) with department-wide voting each quarter?
- Create a Hallway Beautification Committee, and rotate the participants yearly.

There are many ways to be part of this endeavor:
- Volunteer to be on the Hallway Beautification Committee or Subcommittees.
- Submit suggestions.
- Submit your artwork and other personally created works for display.
- Submit a story and storyboard about your area in Pathology, or what makes your job important to you.
- Contribute your technical expertise on how best to display, mount, and facilitate the showcasing of our diversified talent.
- Volunteer to help organize, mount, and display the items.

We welcome your comments regarding all aspects of this initiative. Please give us your thoughts...and let us know what you think would be beautiful, fun, and rewarding to you. We need your participation to make the Hallway Beautification Project successful!!! Just click on this link to send comments or volunteer: shiggins@mednet.ucla.edu

Your artwork could be showcased here!

[Photos by Linda Robertson and Andrea Ragoza]
UCLA IMMUNOGENETICS CENTER wins the “Excellence in Laboratory Support Award”

by Elaine Reed, Ph.D., Vice Chair, Research Services, and Director, Immunogenetics Center and Michael Cecka, Ph.D., Director of Clinical Research, Immunogenetics Center

The UCLA Immunogenetics Center received the 2010 Excellence in Laboratory Support Award from the National Kidney Registry at the American Transplant Congress Annual Meeting in San Diego last month. The award was given for the Immunogenetics Center’s work on enhancing the virtual crossmatch test, which is a critical component in a novel approach to expand the availability of kidney transplants.

The National Kidney Registry facilitates transplantation for patients who have a willing and medically-suitable living kidney donor who is not immunologically compatible. By matching their donors with other incompatible pairs nationwide, the NKR finds ways to exchange the incompatible donor kidneys for compatible kidneys, sometimes involving “chains” of a dozen pairs whose donors give their kidney to a stranger in exchange for someone else’s kidney for their intended recipient. The virtual crossmatch test determines which transplants will work and permits these matches to occur between pairs that live in different parts of the country.

The UCLA Immunogenetics Center has worked closely with laboratories from Seattle to New York to improve the accuracy of their predictions for which donors will match their patients. UCLA has recently performed 30 transplants from these exchanges for patients who would otherwise face a very long wait for a deceased donor kidney transplant.

NEW FACES: Residents & Fellows

by Brit Shackley, M.D.

The 2010-2011 academic year brings many promising new faces to the UCLA Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. With increasing interest in the field of pathology, UCLA had an abundance of well-qualified applicants this interview season. We are happy to welcome four truly outstanding new residents to the department: Sue Chang from New York Medical College, Mazdak Khalighi from Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University, Lawrence Low from University of California, Davis, and Eric Swanson from Rush Medical College.

We are also excited to be welcoming the following new faces:
* Post-sophomore fellow: Julie Huss from UCLA
* Surgical pathology fellows: Dana Altenburger from Orlando Regional HealthCare, Vicki Apichairuk from University of Illinois, Khin Moe Aye from Drexel University, Ellie Lekov from UCLA-Harbor, Yvonne Noronha from Loma Linda, Kristin Olson from University of New Mexico, Lisa Stoll from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, and our own David Lu

* GI/Liver fellows: David Holloman from Medical University of South Carolina and Elham Khanifar from University of California, Irvine
* Transfusion medicine fellow: Marissa Li from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
* Neuropathology fellow: Tracie Pham from St. Joseph Hospital and Medical Center
* Hematopathology fellows: Robert Shibata from New York University Medical Center and Hana Vikil from Wayne State University
* Dermatopathology fellows: Aparache Yang from University of Miami as well as our own Bob Bernaba, Stephen Koh, and Brian Roehmholdt
* Cytopathology fellows: Our own Jennifer Clebanoff and Ali Lowe
* Molecular fellow: Eric Olsen, previously Women’s Health fellow at UCLA

“Welcome to all of our new residents and fellows! We look forward to working with you and getting to know you in the upcoming year.”

Chief Residents (from left): Matthew Fleming, Brit Shackley, Rachel Finck, Marie Showman

NEW Residents (from left): Sue Chang, Mazdak Khalighi, Lawrence Low, Eric Swanson
Clinical Laboratories is dedicated to improving customer service to our physicians and patients. In the past year we have initiated several programs to make our services more efficient and customer focused.

We are implementing a new web-based lab portal that enables physicians to order lab tests and retrieve results online. The new system, 4Medica, can be accessed at the physician’s office or clinic. Lab tests will be ordered directly into 4Medica, and the physician will receive a notice when results are ready for viewing.

The system will assist with Medicare compliance by performing a diagnosis (ICD-9) code check to determine if the tests requested are covered under the diagnosis supplied by the physician. If a non-covered test is ordered, the system will automatically print an Advance Beneficiary Notice (ABN). The ABN is a document that contains an explanation that Medicare will not cover the test and that the patient will be personally liable for the expense. The price of each non-covered test is also included. Patients can then make a choice whether to have the test performed.

We are currently piloting 4Medica in the Internal Medicine Suite. We expect to implement 4Medica in all outpatient clinics over the next several months. Eventually, the system will be used in all our outpatient and outreach locations.

In addition to the web-based portal, we have opened several new patient service centers in the following locations:

- 100 Medical Plaza, Suite 307
  Los Angeles CA 90095
- Parkside Medical Plaza
  24248 Santa Monica Blvd, #301
  Santa Monica CA 90404
- Westlake Patient Service Center
  1250 La Venta Dr, Suite 205
  Westlake Village CA 91361
- 2020 Santa Monica Blvd
  Santa Monica CA 90404
- 1645 16th Street, Suite 100
  Santa Monica CA 90404

Clinical Laboratories is also planning a patient service center for the first floor of 300 Medical Plaza, as well as relocating the patient service center at 1625-16th Street in Santa Monica to a more spacious suite in the Medical Office Building. We believe these changes will greatly enhance our ability to provide the best service to physicians and patients.

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**EXCITING NEW LABORATORY CAREER PATH:**

**Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT)**

by Ann Shadler, Manager, Regulatory Affairs

UCLA participation in an MLT training program is scheduled to begin in September 2010 at the Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center and Orthopaedic Hospital. UCLA will serve as an affiliated facility for the integrated AA degree and certificate program offered at the College of the Canyons situated in Valencia. To become a licensed MLT, participants must earn an associate level degree in science from an accredited program (NACCLS) that includes 6 months of clinical internship, pass a national exam and a California state law exam.

What is an MLT?

- MLTs are an important part of the medical team. Working together closely with pathologists, specialists, and Clinical Laboratory Scientists (CLS), MLTs are instrumental in determining the presence, extent or absence of disease, and providing vital data to evaluate the effectiveness of treatment.
- MLTs are mid level laboratory professionals who, under the supervision of a CLS, perform routine testing in the clinical laboratory. MLTs operate, maintain, and troubleshoot high-tech, automated medical instrumentation.
- MLTs are graduates of accredited MLT training programs and as such have successfully completed core courses in Chemistry, Hematology, Blood Bank, Urinalysis, Coagulation, and Microbiology, plus a 22-week rotation in a clinical laboratory. During this externship, students gain hands-on experience in a clinical laboratory setting.
- MLTs are the second step in the career ladder between a Phlebotomist and a CLS.

As an MLT, will I find a job?

- Currently, there are severe laboratory staffing shortages nationwide including in California. Position vacancy rates range from 9-20%.
- Job projections predict that the need for clinical laboratory professionals will increase dramatically in the next 8 years due to an increasing demand for testing and replacement of retirees.
- MLTs enjoy excellent salaries and benefits as well as exciting opportunities for lifelong learning through continued education.

College of the Canyons is accepting applications for fall entry into the MLT program through August 13th, 2010. For more information, go to: http://www.canyons.edu/Departments/MLT/ or contact Ann Shadler at AShadler@mednet.ucla.edu or x55196.
The UCLA clinical laboratories are regulated by state and federal law. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) control all laboratory testing (except research) performed on humans in the U.S. through the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA), which are federal law. CMS has granted deemed status to several organizations that meet or exceed government standards to inspect on their behalf. Of the six CMS-approved organizations, four have significance at UCLA as part of the accreditation process.

► The College of American Pathologists (CAP) accredits the UCLA clinical laboratories. Utilizing teams of practicing lab professionals as inspectors, assessments are performed using checklists as a blueprint for superior practices.

- Inspection cycle: Every two years with an interim self-inspection in the alternate year
- Window period for an unannounced inspection: three (3) months

The Westwood laboratories enter their window period during the third quarter of this year, 8/3/10 to 11/3/10. The Santa Monica laboratory window begins 12/25/10 and lasts until 3/25/11.

► Joint Commission (JC) inspects hospitals and other healthcare facilities. The UCLA medical centers are accredited by the JC. The clinical laboratories have minimal involvement during JC hospital inspections; participation is limited to responses that support general hospital operations and the wider functioning of the facility.

- Inspection cycle: Every three years
- Window period for an unannounced inspection: Eighteen months

The UCLA Ronald Reagan Medical Center is currently in a JC inspection window period.

► The AABB (formerly known as the American Association of Blood Banks) is an international, not-for-profit association that assesses blood banks, transfusion services, and cellular therapies based on AABB Standards, the Code of Federal Regulations and federal guidance documents. Virtually all major blood banks in the United States are accredited by the AABB.

- Inspection cycle: Every two years

The AABB provides a one-week notice before assessors arrive. The window period for UCLA Division of Transfusion Medicine (Westwood and Santa Monica) is during the first quarter of 2011.

► American Society for Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics (ASHI) is an association of clinical and research professionals whose standards have been established to help ensure accurate and dependable immunogenetics, histocompatibility, transplantation, and parentage/relationship testing consistent with the current state of well-established laboratory procedures.

- Inspection cycle: Every two years with an interim self-inspection in the alternate year
- ASHI notifies the laboratory two weeks prior to the inspection date.

The UCLA window period is from April 15 to June 15. The Immunogenetics laboratory just completed a successful ASHI inspection.

Mix into this soup the fact that various states outside of California require licensure to provide results in their jurisdiction and you have the 38 ingredients in a recipe for craziness called “Licensure and Accreditation” which can be found at the UCLA Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine website.
The growth of the UCLA Blood & Platelet Center from its modest beginnings, when the entirety of its operations comprised what was essentially a skeleton crew managing a single bed in a remote closet-size room, mirrors the medical and technological advances, discoveries and developments in the collection and transfusion of blood products over the last four decades.

In 1972, Carma Lizza, who came to UCLA as a student in the fall of 1968, was appointed as supervisor of the UCLA Blood Bank. Lizza recalls that initially there were merely eleven full-time employees handling all aspects of the blood bank’s operations (which focused solely on patient testing and transfusion). The first order of business, when Lizza arrived, was obtaining accreditation from the AABB (American Association of Blood Banks) founded in 1947 to “promote common goals among Blood banking facilities and the American Blood donating public.”

During this era, a major concern in the medical community was the risk of blood recipients developing post-transfusion hepatitis. On top of this consideration, UCLA physician Dr. Jeffrey J. Eckardt believed that the numerous potential dangers of homologous (often called allogenic) blood transfusion were an unnecessary hazard and represented unacceptable complications for patients undergoing elective surgery.

In 1975, Dr. Eckardt pioneered the autologous blood program wherein blood was collected from patients preoperatively for subsequent reinfusion during their surgery. This procedure became a major part of the UCLA Blood Bank’s responsibilities and, in the first year of application of the new program, 139 autologous units were collected on a single bed in a cramped closet-size room adjacent to the Blood Bank on the A-floor at CHS. This represented the first incarnation of UCLA’s donor center.

Around this time, UCLA also initiated a bone marrow transplant program. This coincided with the introduction of Haemonetics’ first automated blood separating machine: the Model 30 Hemapheresis Machine (M30), which allowed for the collection of leukocytes to be provided for transplants. This marked the beginning of UCLA’s apheresis program. The M30 was housed in a second closet-size room adjacent to the Blood Bank, and the dedicated hemapheresis operation was known as the “Leukocyte Support Unit.”

By the end of the 1970s, the M30 was approved and actively used for additional procedures including specific therapeutic apheresis protocols and for the collection of platelets known as plateletpheresis. This dramatically increased the type and amount of blood product that could be collected. The additional blood product needs, and increased collection numbers, demanded a larger work area. By the end of the 1970s the entire blood collections area had moved to a larger room and the hemapheresis room was expanded.

In the last years of the decade (1978-79 & 1979-80), the Blood Bank collected approximately 4,000 units of whole blood and performed over 1,000 combined plateletpheresis and therapeutic apheresis procedures annually. This set the stage for a huge growth era that significantly impacted blood product collection and transfusion. It would also lead to the ultimate renaming of the donor operations of the blood bank to the “UCLA Blood & Platelet Center”. Over the course of the next three decades, the Blood & Platelet Center would become integral to ensuring an adequate blood and platelet supply for patients at UCLA and serve as a meeting place for a community of volunteers to help save lives through blood donations.

(The history of the UCLA Blood & Platelet Center will be continued in the next newsletter.)