

On Rounds

The University of Alabama
College of Community Health Sciences

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Winter 2000



First Annual Rural Health Conference

*A Day in the Life of Rural Alabama:
Making It Better*

Bryant Conference Center
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Thursday & Friday, April 27-28, 2000

UA's First Annual Rural Health Conference to Focus on Community Action

The University of Alabama--College of Community Health Sciences/UA School of Medicine - Tuscaloosa, College of Human Environmental Sciences, Capstone College of Nursing, School of Social Work, and College of Continuing Studies--present the First Annual Rural Health Conference, "A Day in the Life of Rural Alabama: Making It Better," on April 27-28, 2000.

The conference is jointly sponsored by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Alabama Dept. of Public Health, Alabama Family Practice Rural Health Board, Alabama Farm Federation, Alabama Health Network, Alabama Hospital Association, Alabama Office of Rural Health, Alabama Power Foundation, Alabama Primary Health Care Association, Alabama Rural Health Association, Alabama State Dept. of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, Alabama State Nurses' Association, Assisted Living Facilities Association of Alabama, Alabama Child Caring Foundation/Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, Medical Association of the State of Alabama, National Association of Social Workers (Alabama Chapter), and the Rural Alabama Health Alliance.

"A healthy rural Alabama requires the capacity of residents of rural communities and of the professionals who seek to assist them to work together positively," says the conference planning committee. This conference will bring together voices of rural communities as well as voices of professionals in a number of fields with interest in rural health. Pre-conference meetings conducted around the state will supplement this mix of concerns. Furthermore, the conference will allow participants

to engage local communities in addressing rural health concerns, promote more efficient partnerships among citizens and professionals, and develop more effective strategies that will make life in rural communities better. The conference features exhibits, poster sessions, networking opportunities, casual business atmospheres, and excellent, qualified speakers.

John W. Hatch, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor, North Carolina Central University and William Rand Kenan, Jr. Professor Emeritus, Chapel Hill School of Public Health, University of North Carolina, will present the Thursday Luncheon Keynote Address. Thursday's Dinner Presentation will be presented by Ed Conyers, Motivational Humorist and Presenter, Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Friday's concluding Keynote Presentation will be presented by Wayne Myers, M.D., Director of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, Rockville, Maryland.

An objective of the conference will be to identify what problems all share and what the basic choices are for how to address those problems. Post-conference follow-up deliberations of those choices in rural communities will carefully weigh the costs and benefits of alternative strategies for more effective action to improve rural health in Alabama. This post-conference work will build the agenda for a follow-up conference in 2001.

For more information about this dynamic conference, contact Judy Hand in the College of Continuing Studies. To register, contact Registration Services, College of Continuing Studies, (205) 348-3000.

Dr. Hefelfinger Retires

Dr. David Hefelfinger, Professor and Chair of Pediatrics, retired from CCHS on February 28, 2000. Dr. Hefelfinger was the first faculty member recruited by Dean **William Willard*** for the new College of Community Health Sciences. Dr. Hefelfinger reminisced at his retirement reception that he was very impressed with Dean Willard. Dr. Willard called to ask if he could come and see him in Pensacola about coming to CCHS. Dr. Hefelfinger recalled that he said yes, but that he had patients to see, and Dean Willard replied that he would come "tomorrow," and wait until Dr. Hefelfinger was finished seeing



Dr. David Hefelfinger and his wife Virginia read the inscription on the cutglass bowl he received as a gift from the college upon his retirement. More inside.)

his patients. He sat in the waiting room of Dr. Hefelfinger's private pediatric practice in Pensacola until he was through seeing patients.

"I didn't know deans of medical schools did that, said Dr. Hefelfinger," and I was very impressed."

Dean Willard and subsequent visits to the new CCHS won him over, and he brought his family to Tuscaloosa in November of 1973. He and his wife, Virginia, moved with their two sons just nine days before the due date of their third child's birth.

Dr. Hefelfinger looked forward to teaching and he enjoyed his administrative duties. He began seeing patients in Tuscaloosa, and he now has patients whose mothers he cared for when he came here. He conducted his private practice in the university setting--as he and Dr. Willard had agreed--and he was soon joined on the faculty and in practice by **Bob Pieroni, MD, Riley Lumpkin, MD, and Bill DeShazo, MD.** Dr. **Roland Ficken**, who became Dean of the College, was another early arrival at CCHS.

***William Willard, MD**, was also founding Dean of the University of Kentucky School of Medicine, and author of *The Willard Report*, the charter document for a new specialty called Family Medicine (which earned him the title "father of Family Medicine in America").

(Continued on page 3)

Dr. Burnum Joins Faculty Fulltime



Dr. Burnum, outside the UA Ed Tower at DCH, now devotes full time to teaching at CCHS.

John Burnum, MD, a Tuscaloosa native who survived the Battle of the Bulge as an infantryman in World War II and then graduated *cum laude* from Harvard Medical School, joined the CCHS Internal Medicine faculty full time last fall after retiring from private practice. He is "a scholar in residence," he explains, and devotes full time to teaching residents and medical students. He has been a clinical faculty member since helping to found CCHS in the 1970's.

Dean **William Curry, MD**, has applauded Dr. Burnum's decision to return to the college to give students and residents the benefit of his experience in excellent patient care. "The value of what he can bring to our students is immeasurable," he said. Dr. Burnum spends much of his time with junior students and residents working on the inpatient internal

medicine service. He starts his day at 7:00, interpreting EKG's, then attends morning report and makes rounds. He conducts case discussions and problem-based learning sessions and mentors students in the art of bedside examination.

"Dr. Burnum brings students and residents the best of both worlds," said Dr. Curry, "the cutting edge of modern high tech medicine and the timelessness of classic bedside physical diagnosis. His being here is a gift to all of us."

Dr. Burnum, one of the best-loved internists in Tuscaloosa during his 45 years in practice, said it was difficult for him to leave his patients, but there was a small window of opportunity available for retirement, and he decided it was time. He refers to the fact that he and his partners had recruited two internal medicine chief residents from UASOM recently to join their practice. Since Dr. Burnum was in 1953-54 the first Chief of Medicine at UA's medical school-then the Medical College of Alabama-he was pleased to invite his successors as in the position of Chief Resident to succeed him in practice as well--especially since he wants to leave his patients in the best of care.

Although he has devoted himself to his patients and to medicine--he was made a Master by the American College of Physicians--he has also been involved in a variety of other activities. His spectrum of interests may not surprise those who remember he graduated from UA with honors, not in pre-med, but in chemical engineering and English.

Saturday, May 6, 2000

8:00 - Continental Breakfast Bryant Conference Center

8:30 - Pharmacotherapy Update Continuing Medical Education

Noon - Family Picnic on the Quad

7:00 - Lampoon

Bryant Conference Center

For more information: Vicki Johnson, CCHS Advancement Officer
(205) 348-0093 vjohnson@cchs.ua.edu

He served on the Governor's Tort Reform Advisory Committee in 1987 and he is past president of the Tuscaloosa Fine Arts Council and has served as a Vestryman at Christ Episcopal Church. He credits his wife, Celeste, for his civic and community involvement.

"We are very likely to spend our quality time as bag people walking along Queen City Avenue picking up trash," says Dr. Burnum, and he eagerly shares a verbal resume of her activities that rivals his own. "She has an insatiable intellectual curiosity which keeps us both alive," he says.

The two have endowed the *Burnum Distinguished Faculty Award* at UA for annual recognition of excellent teaching.

Dr. Burnum himself has won teaching awards--"Teacher of the Year" in 1982 from CCHS, and in 1992 the prestigious Ralph O. Claypool, Sr. Memorial Award. This honor is awarded to only one recipient in the nation each year by the American College of Physicians to recognize an outstanding practitioner of internal medicine and clinical faculty teacher. He was also named "Internist of the Year" in 1992 by the Alabama Society of Internal Medicine and received the 1992 Laureate Award for Alabama from the American College of Physicians.

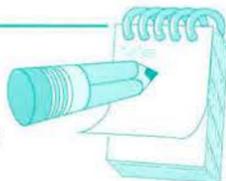
Dr. Burnum's many interests are reflected in the broad scope of his writings. His interest in how emotional and behavioral patterns affect health resulted in published articles in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* on treating patients with self-destructive habits (1974) and "The Worried Sick" (1978). He wrote "Diagnosis of Depression in a General Medical Practice" for *Postgraduate Medicine* in 1982 and followed with "La Maladie du Petit Papier: Is Writing a List of Symptoms a Sign of Emotional Disorder" in 1985 and "Secrets about Patients" (1991) for the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The role of the physician and medical politics are topics covered in "Medical Vampires" (1986) and "Medical Practice a la Mode-How Medical Fashions Determine Medical Care" (1987), in the *New Eng Journal of Medicine*. He received media attention for his views on commercialization of medical care and marketing trends in medicine, with "The Physician as a Double Agent" (1977) and "The Unfortunate Care of Dr. Z: How to Succeed in Medical Practice in 1984," a parody on a fictitious Dr. Z which was entered into the *Congressional Record*.

Dr. Burnum will acknowledge that he has loved his work in medicine and his patients and been pleased with his accolades, but his modesty and humor prevail as he closes this interview. He cites as his career highlight (and a poster advertising his performance hangs on his office wall) a clarinet solo during the 1940 Tuscaloosa High Band concert, for which tickets cost ten cents.

Faculty Notes

Send faculty news items to Linda Jackson, Editor
ljackson@cchs.ua.edu 348-1302 Fax 348-9417 (Dean's office)



Health Research Consulting Service Takes More Active Role Under New Director

The Health Research Consulting Service, housed in the CCHS Department of Behavioral and Community Medicine, offers assistance to faculty, residents, students, and staff with medical research and interdisciplinary research projects. Dr. **John Higginbotham**, Associate Professor of Behavioral and Community Medicine, recently joined the faculty and assumed leadership of the Health Research Consulting Service (HRCS), which had reduced its activities due to funding cuts and staff shortages in recent years.

"The mission of the College--like that of The University--includes education, research, and service, said Dr. Higginbotham, "and the mission of the HRCS is to lend a hand to our faculty and others so that the research arm of the college is strong."

The HRCS has been in operation at CCHS since 1989. Its predecessor, the Research Consulting Lab (RCL), was established by CCHS in 1984 to encourage and facilitate research by faculty, professional staff, residents, and students and to promote interdisciplinary research in the health sciences.

Dr. **James Leeper**, Professor and Chair of the Department of Behavioral and Community Medicine, and the first director of the Research Consulting Lab, says, "Dr. Higginbotham brings an excellent set of skills to reinvigorate the research enterprise."

Research consultation and technical assistance has been ongoing, but under Dr. Higginbotham's direction, the research staff has expanded its efforts. The HRCS is presently conducting or assisting with five major grant-funded projects, several research activities which are likely to receive funding, and a number of research studies which faculty researchers expect to publish in professional journals. The HRCS offers assistance in identifying sources of funding and in preparing grant proposals, and locating personnel and coordinates exploration of collaborative research as requested.

The services of the HRCS include: research design; project management; presentation of research results; preparation of research proposals, including requests for institutional review board (IRB) approval; statistical analysis and interpretation; instrument design for data collection; mailing management; medical records extractions; editorial assistance and identification of potential publishers; and guidance to new and developing investigators seeking to refine their research skills.

For more information, contact: Dr. John Higginbotham, (205) 348-7259, jhiggin@cchs.ua.edu 389C Nott Hall, or the Health Research Consulting Service, Box 870326, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0326. Or call, toll-free: 1-877-363-CCHS (1-877-363-2247).

Dr. Taylor Appointed Interim Chair of Pediatrics

Dr. Michael Taylor, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, joined the faculty of CCHS in 1991. He earned his MD at the University of Louisville School of Medicine in Kentucky and completed his residency at The Children's Hospital, University of Alabama Medical Center. He was in private practice of pediatrics in Paducah, Kentucky and Raleigh, N.C. and served on the clinical faculty of the Department of Pediatrics at the University of North Carolina for seven years. He was Chief Medical Examiner for Wake County in North Carolina, doing child sexual abuse and physical abuse evaluations for the state of North Carolina, and served as Child Medical Examiner for the Kentucky Attorney General's Sexual Assault Medical Exam Protocol.

Since moving to Alabama in 1991, he has served as Medical Director of the West Alabama Child Medical Program, a clinic for medical-legal evaluations of potentially abused children, and as a member of the Tuscaloosa County Multidisciplinary Review Team (which reviews child abuse cases). He is founder, executive committee member, and past president of the Alabama Professional Society on the Abuse of Children. He is also a member of the Child Abuse Subcommittee of the American Academy of Pediatrics.



Michael Taylor, MD

Hefelfinger (Continued)

One of his proudest accomplishments in his transition from private practitioner to academic faculty member was research and writing. He has published 32 papers during his career. His B.A. in English was good preparation, and he looks forward to doing more writing now that he has retired. He commented that he is known as "Dr. Red Ink" among medical students due to his insistence on literate writing. He is also very proud of the faculty he has recruited, including those who have moved on to other prestigious institutions.

Asked why he had chosen pediatrics, he said that he had observed in his training that children could be very sick when you saw them one day and bouncing back the next. "You can really make a difference when you care for children," he said. "That appealed to me, and the fact that they have such an honest nature."

Dr. Hefelfinger, a true child advocate, has worked to secure better services and health care for children over the years. In one of the first cooperative ventures between the fledgling school of medicine and the U.A. law school, he worked with law professor Richard Thigpen in 1974 to draft the Alabama's Neonatal health insurance bill modeled on Florida's legislation. Seeing an unfilled need for care for very sick babies, he helped establish the high risk nursery at DCH. He realized there was no neonatal intensive care unit between Mobile and Birmingham, he said, so he went to Dean Willard and got permission to organize a breakfast for legislators and hospital administrators. "Every legislator in the six-county area are attended," he recalls proudly. The NICU at DCH was launched, and he recruited Dr. Choi to administer the Level 3 nursery. Establishing the NICU helped lay the foundation for DCH's becoming a regional medical center and trauma center.

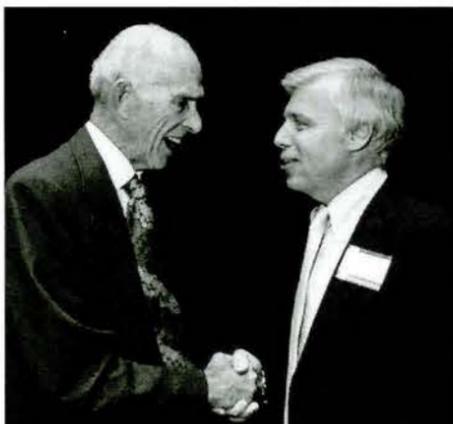
Another legacy he leaves is the DCH pediatric intensive care unit he helped to establish for children suffering from severe asthma, prolonged seizures, poisonings, car wrecks, and other critical injury or illness. He also (with Dr. Jerry Palmer) founded the West Alabama Pediatric Society in 1976.

A North Carolina native and UNC graduate (English and Economics, 1961), Dr. Hefelfinger received his MD from UNC in 1965 and trained in pediatrics at Vanderbilt University and the University of Texas at Galveston. After his army service in Germany, he and Virginia settled in Florida, where they had enjoyed vacations during their courtship.

Lured from private practice by Dean Willard, Dr. Hefelfinger built the pediatrics department, served as Associate Dean for Clinical affairs 1978-80, and won the teaching award from senior medical students in 1977. He also took up the cause of patient education about immunizations after finding that his patients' mothers were largely ignorant of the importance of vaccines and preventable illnesses. He has lectured on "Epitaph of a Disease: the Eradication of Smallpox," and hopes to do more lecturing during his retirement.

He is looking forward to this "quality time," he says, to reflect and do the things he didn't have time for before retirement. Besides writing, he plans to read more (both fiction and non-fiction), travel, and improve his golf game.

He finds it hard to leave his patients, since he has taken the time and effort to become close to them and their families. It is a lesson he has endeavored



Dr. Hefelfinger (r) with Dr. William Willard, MD, the first dean of CCHS, in the early days of the college.



CCHS Dean William Curry, MD, (l) with Dr. Hefelfinger. Below with his faculty-- Ashley Evans, MD, Dr. Hefelfinger, Elizabeth Cockrum, MD, and Mike Taylor, MD--and their parting gift, a print of Denny Chimes.



to teach his students over the years--getting to know your patients helps you understand why they don't comply sometimes or how their problems are affecting their health and makes treating them more effective. Also, he says, "you can't fool kids. They know if you care about them, and they know if you don't."

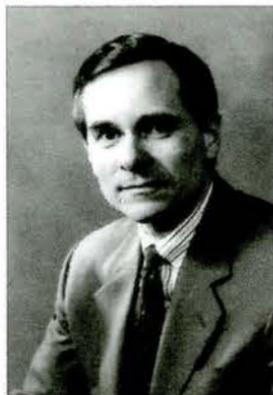
REFLECTIONS

by William Curry, MD, Dean

Near the end of the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, there is a scene in which the seekers for the Holy Grail must choose from an array of chalices. If you didn't see the film, perhaps you remember the soft drink commercial that was a take-off on it. When the greedy, pro-Nazi nemesis of the movie's heroes drinks from his chosen cup, only to degenerate and melt before our eyes, the wise old Knight Templar remarks, "He chose poorly." Indiana Jones, motivated to save the life of his wounded father, drinks without harm, and the Knight says, "You have chosen wisely."

We are choosing - I hope wisely - a number of new paths for our College. All of them should advance our mission of teaching and training medical students and family practice residents. Sitting on my desk today is the choice of a new management information system for CCHS. It is expensive, it is complex, and it will challenge every one of us to implement it. The benefits should be well worth the effort, giving us the opportunity to analyze and understand our clinical practice as never before, linking that practice and the education of students and residents through practice pattern analysis and through the Clinical Digital Library Project of our Health Sciences Library. Such a system will make clinical research remarkably easier and better. But in the world of MIS, many a group has chosen poorly.

This issue of OnRounds describes other paths, other choices. Our First Annual Rural Health Conference, April 27-28,



Dr. Curry

promises an exciting new approach to the challenges of rural health. It is a signal event in the history of CCHS's leadership on rural issues. That rural mandate is another essential part of our mission. In medical education, we mark the retirement of David Hefelfinger as Chair of our Department of Pediatrics. As a College, we enjoyed the opportunity to celebrate David's contributions and the legacy he leaves us. Research continues to enjoy increased emphasis and success at CCHS, as illustrated by the reactivation of the Health Research Consulting Service under the leadership of Dr. John Higginbotham. Another key component of our plan for the future of CCHS remains a new building that will integrate all our functions - academic, administrative, clinical, research, and outreach. It will provide the structure we need, just as the new information system will provide the means to turn data into information.

But data and information are but two waystations on the path to wisdom, and it is wisdom that we need if we are to "choose wisely." If a new MIS (management information system) is the image of high technology, then the contribution of our newest faculty member, John Burnum, M.D., is the image of the kind of wisdom we seek. As Clinical Scholar in Residence, John is enriching the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of our students, residents, and faculty. Just as we expect every student and resident to be able to search the medical internet and to make presentations in Power Point, we also expect every one to be proficient in the classical skills of the history and physical examination. I can think of no more powerful image of that combination of high technology and classical medicine than John Burnum, surrounded by a group of students as he finishes a computer search using our new MIS, followed by an invitation from John: "Now let's go to the bedside." That is choosing wisely.

**Notes
from
Alums**

Please send alumni news to *OnRounds*.

Include your graduation date from med school or residency and your current address and phone.

Former BioPrep Student Enters Medical Practice

Cedric Harris of Forkland has returned to Tuscaloosa, where he finished medical school in 1996, to enter the practice of internal medicine. Dr. Harris was involved in the CCHS BioPrep program



to identify and nurture talented rural high school students, and he was a student assistant for BBioPrep during his college years. CCHS Research Associate **Julia Hartman**, his work-study supervisor (who also worked with the BioPrep students), said she had known Cedric since the ninth grade, and seeing him at "noon conference" (CME lecture) made her eyes water she was so proud of him. "It was like encountering an old friend, but, boy, did it make me feel old!"



Cedric Harris during his CCHS medical school days.
Left: Julia Hartman

Melissa Behringer Selected by AMA for Emerging Leader Program

Melissa Behringer, MD, a 1994 graduate of the CCHS family practice residency, has been chosen by the American Medical Association to participate in the AMA Glaxo Wellcome Emerging Leaders Development Program in March. She is one of 50 young physicians selected from a large pool of applicants to attend the program to be held in conjunction with the National Leadership Development Conference, March 25-28, 2000, in Miami Beach, Florida.

Dr. Behringer has been active in the state medical association and has served on the executive board of the Rural Alabama Health Alliance representing Bibb County since 1995. She was a member of the charter board of directors for the Rural Alabama AHEC incorporated last year.

Dr. Behringer, who had practiced in Bibb County since completing a fellowship in



Melissa Behringer, MD, (left), Executive Secretary of the Rural Alabama Health Alliance, with Rural Health Scholars who received 1999 RAHA scholarships--Joseph Walker, Shakira Thomas, and Jesse O'Reilly--at a reception last fall in Tuscaloosa. Dr. Behringer is now on the faculty in Huntsville.

obstetrics at CCHS in 1995, has recently joined the faculty of the UA School of Medicine in Huntsville.

Wheat Honored by Family Practice Rural Health Board

John Wheat, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Community Medicine and Internal Medicine and Director of the Rural Scholars Programs at CCHS, was honored by the Alabama Family Practice Rural Health Board last fall for his dedication to improving rural health in Alabama. In November, Dr. **Neil Christopher**, Chairman of the Alabama Family Practice Rural Health Board, presented Dr. Wheat with a plaque citing the Board's "gratitude and appreciation to him for extraordinary commitment to rural Family Medicine in Alabama."



Neil Christopher, MD, with Dr. John Wheat

An internist and occupational medicine specialist, Dr. Wheat has worked for ten years in the University of Alabama School of Medicine's Tuscaloosa program to establish partnerships with communities and agencies interested in rural health and to build a "Rural Medical Pipeline" which will help to recruit and prepare more rural physicians for the state.

"The School of Medicine can lead the state to produce a larger supply of rural physicians," says Dr. Wheat, "by pumping rural students into a pipeline of medical education emphasizing rural medicine."

Dr. Wheat has also been appointed by Governor **Don Siegelman** to represent Alabama on the Appalachian Regional Commission's Health Policy Advisory Committee. Dr. Wheat stressed in his report to Governor Siegelman "the relationship between health care and the economic vitality of small towns."

"Alabama has something to add to the policy discussion," said Dr. Wheat, "including the remarkable decrease in Pickens County infant mortality through the developments of its local health care system, the building of the University of Alabama Rural Medicine Pipeline, and Bibb County's success at enrolling practically all children with both health insurance programs and sources of primary care."



Madie Poole (Mrs. Victor Poole) of Hale County, left, looks over a scrapbook about CCHS Dean William Willard with CCHS Advancement Officer Vicki Johnson, who retrieved it from the CCHS Archives. Mrs. Poole is using the information about the formation of CCHS in her research for an article about Dr. Willard, who settled in Hale County when he moved to Alabama to start the College. The scrapbook will also be valuable as a resource to the committee Dean Curry has just appointed to write the history of the college, said Johnson.



The College of Community Health Sciences is a clinical branch campus of the University of Alabama School of Medicine. Established in 1972, CCHS emphasizes family practice and the other primary care disciplines and provides a sound basic medical education for all medical students assigned to this campus. CCHS also trains family doctors through a three-year family practice residency program to meet the urgent need for family physicians. A primary focus of the CCHS mission is seeking solutions for rural health care problems in Alabama.

OnRounds is published quarterly by CCHS. Send information to the editor, Box 870326, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487. (205) 348-1302, ljackson@cchs.ua.edu

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