Dr. Cockrum Appointed Chief Medical Officer

Elizabeth Cockrum, MD, associate professor of pediatrics at CCHS, has been appointed Chief Medical Officer of CCHS/UA School of Medicine - Tuscaloosa. Dean Curry appointed Dr. Cockrum to replace Dr. Marc Armstrong, who retired November 1, 2003, after serving the College for eight years. "Her appointment was effective Monday, November 10," said Dean Curry in his announcement to faculty and staff. "She will report directly to the Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. John Maxwell," he added. "In this position, Dr. Cockrum will be the principal liaison between medical staff and clinic administration, as well as with the Capstone Health Services Foundation Board of Directors," said Dr. Curry. "She will serve as medical director of Capstone Medical Center, where she will appoint physician clinic directors in consultation with Department Chairs. She will have liaison and oversight responsibilities at Russell Student Health Center, although the medical staff of RSHC will continue to have its own medical director."

She will be the physician leader of our group practice, with responsibility for identifying and removing obstacles to excellent patient care. She will be the chief physician spokesperson for CCHS. Dr. Cockrum will continue her current teaching, research, and clinical responsibilities in the Department of Pediatrics.

Dr. Cockrum, a graduate of UA and the UA School of Medicine, did her pediatric residency at The Children’s Hospital of Alabama in Birmingham. She joined the CCHS faculty in 1989. She was promoted to associate professor of clinical pediatrics in 1993. Cockrum has served as director of the pediatric clerkship for third-year medical students since 1991, and she also served as chair of the pediatric department at DCH Regional Medical Center from 1996-1998.

"Dr. Cockrum has the best knowledge base for care of pediatric patients I have ever encountered," said a colleague in a letter recommending her for the Outstanding Commitment to Teaching Award. "This knowledge is accompanied by an extremely keen clinical acumen. Together, these qualities make her an outstanding pediatrician, enabling her to provide students with the best learning experiences possible."

She instructs third- and fourth-year medical students at CCHS, a branch of the University of Alabama School of Medicine, in routine well child and sick care in the pediatrics outpatient clinic at the Capstone Medical Clinic and teaches pediatric emergency, in-patient, and newborn nursery care at DCH.

CCHS Mourns Death of Dr. Armstrong

Dr. Marc Armstrong died Sunday, December 7, at his home in Texas. During the past eight and one-half years until his retirement from CCHS December 1, Dr. Armstrong served as a faculty member in Family Medicine, Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs, Director of the Residency Program, and most recently Chair of the College’s Building Committee. "Marc was a great friend, a skilled administrator, and a devoted physician and teacher," said Dean William Curry, MD. "He cared deeply about his patients and about those he taught and appreciated the weight of responsibility that falls to those of us who teach the art and science of medicine."

A memorial service for Dr. Armstrong was held December 14 at Daltons’ Funeral Home in Lewisville, Texas, and a memorial service was held in Tuscaloosa on January 3.

Marc Andrew Armstrong, MD, son of a career army officer, grew up "all over the world," said his friend and mentor, Dr. Bill Owens, Interim Chair of Family Medicine. He graduated from high school in Highland Falls, New York, where his father taught mathematics at the US Military Academy at West Point. He received his BS in Chemistry from The University of North Texas in Denton in 1970, and his MD from Tulane Medical School in New Orleans in November, 1973.

He became the first resident to enter the newly established Tuscaloosa Family Practice Residency in January of 1974 and remained until April of 1975 when he entered the private practice of medicine with Dr. Owens in Centreville, AL.

Armstrong moved his private practice to Texas in 1976 and joined the faculty of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas in 1992, after 13 years in private practice and brief tours with the US Coast Guard and the homeless medical outreach program at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas. He returned to the University of Alabama in February of 1995 as Associate Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Director of the Tuscaloosa Family Practice Residency, a position he held until June 1999. Since October of 1995, he had served as Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs while continuing as a valued member of the faculty.

"Dr. Armstrong was a caring physician, gentleman, and boss," said Dianne Kerr, Director of Nursing at Capstone Medical Center. "He was fully supportive of the CMC staff, and his decision-making was always prompt, polite, and gracious." She described Dr. Armstrong as "a tremendous motivator," saying that he always listened and had a great sense of humor. "He was admired and respected, and his death has been deeply felt," she added.

Dr. Owings said that Dr. Armstrong considered his greatest accomplishment at CCHS his role in working with many fine individuals in making the new building a reality. "The thing he most appreciates from his training here at CCHS," added Dr. Owings, "was the opportunity to work with mentors and teachers of the high caliber this Residency has always provided. I'm sure he would like to be remembered primarily as a good physician."
Moving Ahead in Difficult Times

Marc Armstrong was a clinical teacher of the classical sort. By that I don't refer to his bowling, his amused "gentleman in a dustcoat" appearance, or even how impressively well-read he was. He was "classical" in that he had a clear idea of what medical teaching was about. He could express that in many ways, from different perspectives, but it was always direct and concise.

Bell, that behind all those explanations was a fundamental assumption: effective teaching is about something bigger than either the teacher or the learner. Marc's shocking and untimely death, a month or two before his retirement, was a blow to our college, his patients, and all who knew him. I miss Marc a lot, and I especially miss the responsibility I've been called upon to remember in those of his fundamental assumptions. Marc understood that we believe there is a purpose to our work, to our lives.

That is why Marc loved being here and why he knew it mattered. May we never forget it.

Lichtenstein's Research Receives Broad Coverage

Research by Dr. Bronwen Lichtenstein, a research scientist in the Department of Social Health Science & Medicine, has received widespread attention. She has published several articles in leading journals and has been invited to speak at numerous conferences. Her research on the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STI) has been particularly acclaimed.

Lichtenstein's conclusion is that the increase is due to a combination of poverty, social problems, and domestic abuse. The subject has been a topic of discussion in the news media, including newspapers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post. Her research has been cited in several influential articles, including "AIDS and the Management of an Epidemic," published in "Social Science & Medicine" (Chapter 19).

For more information, visit the University of Alabama at Birmingham's website at http://rhc.ua.edu or call the Institute for Rural Health Research at (205) 348-0025.

UA and Public Health co-Host Rural Health Conference

The University of Alabama for Rural Health Research Conference will be held for the Annual Rural Health Conference April 29-30, 2004, at the Bryant Conference Center on the University’s campus in Tuscaloosa. Pre-conference workshops will be held at the conference center on April 28.

The theme of the 2004 conference (the Fifth Annual Rural Health Conference) is "Working Together Today for a Healthier Tomorrow." The Institute will host the event with the Alabama Public Health Association Inc.

The conference will include three break-out session themes: working together with communities, working together with public health, and working together with health professionals. Keynote speakers will speak to the issues of poverty, housing, and health.

Each year, the Rural Health Conference draws hundreds of attendees, including health care professionals, community and business leaders, government officials, academic researchers, representatives of faith-based organizations, and others who come together to find comprehensive and creative solutions to the health issues that impact our rural citizens.

For more information, visit the Rural Health Conference website at http://rhc.ua.edu or call the Institute for Rural Health Research at (205) 348-0025.

Researcher says poverty drives spread of AIDS among blacks

Researcher says poverty drives spread of AIDS among blacks

By Bronwen Lichtenstein

AIDS is a global epidemic that affects millions of people worldwide. In the United States, the epidemic has had a particularly devastating impact on African Americans, who account for a disproportionate number of new AIDS cases. Dr. Bronwen Lichtenstein, a research scientist at the University of Alabama, has been studying the spread of AIDS among African Americans and has found that poverty is a significant factor in the spread of the disease.

In an article published in the "Journal of Social and Adolescent Health," Dr. Lichtenstein and her colleagues found that poverty is a major factor in the spread of AIDS among African Americans. The researchers found that individuals living in poverty are more likely to contract the disease, and that poverty is a major factor in the spread of the disease.

"We found that poverty is a major factor in the spread of AIDS among African Americans," Dr. Lichtenstein said. "The data suggest that poverty is a major factor in the spread of the disease, and that poverty is a major factor in the spread of the disease.

The researchers also found that poverty is a major factor in the spread of the disease, and that poverty is a major factor in the spread of the disease.

Dr. Lichtenstein and her colleagues have been studying the spread of AIDS among African Americans for several years, and have found that poverty is a major factor in the spread of the disease. They have published several articles in leading journals, and have been invited to speak at numerous conferences.

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For more information, visit the Rural Health Conference website at http://rhc.ua.edu or call the Institute for Rural Health Research at (205) 348-0025.
Institute for Rural Health Research and Tuskegee University Work to Reduce Disparities in Alabama’s Black Belt

Alabama’s Black Belt is a region of the state that has borne extreme poverty and ill health for more than a century. People here die at higher rates than other Alabamians from cancer, heart disease and diabetes. Doctors and hospitals are scarce.

The University of Alabama Institute for Rural Health Research, part of the College of Community Health Sciences, is working to change that. Through a collaborative effort known as Project EXPORT, the IRHR and Tuskegee University are slowly chipping away at the health disparities that exist in a dozen Black Belt counties.

Together with communities in those counties and with a $7.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health, researchers at IRHR and Tuskegee work to discover why vaccination rates for elderly African-Americans are so much lower than rates for the general population, to increase breast and cervical cancer awareness and screening and to educate rural minority families about diabetes and how to care for those with the disease.

That kind of leadership and collaboration is the hallmark of the IRHR. "In everything we do, we’re working with communities," says John C. Higginbotham, PhD, Director of the University’s Institute for Rural Health Research. "I want to emphasize that we’re not working on folks, we’re working with folks so that they have a voice and have the ability to have input, as well as a stake in what happens in their communities as we try to reduce the disparities."

"When we work together, we can achieve our goals," says Higginbotham, who also serves as Interim Chair and Associate Professor for the Department of Community and Rural Medicine in the College of Community Health Sciences. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has acknowledged in a July 2002 report that most current approaches to rural health research and care are fragmented and often ineffective. But here in Alabama, the IRHR has already begun to bring coordination and cohesiveness to efforts to reduce health disparities in Alabama’s rural communities, particularly those in the Black Belt.

Created in July 2001, the IRHR works closely with six colleges and schools within The University of Alabama— the College of Community Health Sciences, Capstone College of Nursing, the School of Social Work, Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration, the College of Human Environmental Sciences and the College of Arts and Sciences—as well as with numerous partners in rural communities.

The mission of the IRHR is to bring about the highest attainable standard of health for rural citizens through research, education and outreach. The Institute pursues this mission through the combined strength of scientific knowledge, community support and informed public policy.

To date, the IRHR has been a participant in state and federal grants totaling more than $17 million for research projects that focus on reducing health disparities in rural Alabama.

In addition, the IRHR serves as a resource for researchers, individuals and organizations working to improve the health of rural communities and can assist in identifying relevant topics for investigation, developing research methods, designing data collection instruments, collecting information through focus groups, interviews and surveys, and analyzing data. The IRHR can also assist faculty and researchers with grant writing and management of research projects. Through the IRHR Grant Development Program, young faculty can learn more about grant writing and receive guidance in conducting and managing research projects from more experienced IRHR investigators and faculty.

And, the Institute hosts an annual Rural Health Conference that draws hundreds of attendees, including health care professionals, community and business leaders, government officials, academic researchers, representatives of faith-based organizations and others who have input, as well as a stake in what happens in their communities as we try to reduce the disparities.

"It is only when we work together as individuals, communities, universities and with government that we can eliminate disparities," Higginbotham says. "It is going to take us all."
2003 Family Practice Residents at Graduation: (front row) Cathy Skinner, Erik Andreu, Tracy Lane, Tamara Hughes, Maggie Stewart Morr. (back row) Ed Shackleford, Dale Christensen, Salih Faldon, Calin Pernes, Phil Sundquist, Jonathan Polhemus, Larry Thead, Tom Linberg.

Dr. Ed Shackleford receives the DeShazo Family Medicine Award from Dr. Chelley Alexander (l).

Left: Chief Residents Calin Pernes and Catherine Skinner with Dr. Armstrong as he admires the gift of special appreciation he received.

Budge: Dr. Alan Blum (r) presented excellence awards for R-3 conference presentation to Larry Thead (l), Tom Linberg, and Calin Pernes (second from right).

Dr. Eric Andreu accepts his certificate of graduation from Residency Director Sam Gaskins. He joins the alumni of the Tuscaloosa Family Practice Residency, whose graduates now total 303.

Dr. Jim Leeper (center), Professor of Community & Rural Medicine, presented Research Awards to Catherine Skinner and Ed Shackleford.
CCHS Supporters Honored by Alabama Rural Health Association

Fayette family physician Richard Rutland was recognized with the Rural Health Provider Exceptional Achievement Award by the Alabama Rural Health Association (ARHA) at its annual Rural Health Week luncheon held in Montgomery in October. Marjorie Johnson of Shorter, Alabama, received the Rural Volunteer Service Award. Dr. Don Williamson, State Health Officer of Alabama, presented the awards.

The RURAL HEALTH EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT Award is presented to a provider who both lives and works in an Alabama community which is rural (non-Metropolitan Statistical Area) and whose livelihood comes from delivering health care in an exceptional manner through direct services or in the administration of services—making lasting contributions to a community through tireless efforts with an unselfish, compassionate, and cooperative attitude.

Dr. Rutland is completing his 53rd year in the practice of medicine. He closed his office practice in 1997 and immediately assumed the position of Medical Director at the 122-patient Fayette nursing home. He later provided similar services to Lamar County’s only nursing home.

During the 1970’s, Dr. Rutland was instrumental in the founding of the Alabama Rural Health Sciences at UA and took time away from his practice to teach clinicals to family practice residents. He is a strong supporter of rural health and has served as president of a rural preceptorship so that medical students and residents received some training in rural areas.

In 1981, Dr. Rutland was recognized nationally as “Family Doctor of the Year” by Good Housekeeping magazine and the American Academy of Family Physicians for his Certificate of Distinction” for 50 years of medical practice from the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, AAFP, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Duke University.

Dr. Rutland and his wife of 54 years, Nancy Babb Rutland, have four children: Richard O. Rutland, III, MD, of Giddens; Craig D. Rutland, MD, of Fairhope; Cindy McBrearty of Fairhope; and Melissa Cathey of Montgomery. Rutland, MD, of Nashville, TN; Dr. DeLene Christopher—president of the Alabama Academy of Family Physicians, became exasperated with UAB’s foot dragging in training rural family physicians and was working to provide some of the best family practice residency training in the state. But taking a look at the Convocation Issue of On Rounds, the CCHS publication which came out a couple of weeks ago, tells us that all is not well. Of the twenty-five fine looking medical students who graduate from the Tuscaloosa program, only one is entering a family practice residency. Interestingly, four are going into anesthesiology residencies.

Let me remind you that the vast majority of doctors practicing in rural Alabama are family doctors. And do the people of rural Alabama want the other good news? Does the group of young people, the usual number of twelve beginning their family practice residency in Tuscaloosa, but closer study again indicates that all is not well. Of the twelve, nine are foreign medical graduates; only three are graduates of a U.S. medical school. In a medical education program where the faculty goes to extremes trying to produce rural doctors for Alabama, is likely the success rate with these two groups will be low. This must be shattering to the faculty.

Dr. Rutland received the rural family practice residency of the University’s College of Community Health Sciences in 1976. Since then, the total number of graduates from the Tuscaloosa program and its fellow program at the University of Alabama in Huntsville now total 600. The addition of the graduates of the other seven or eight family practice residency programs in the state which later could bring the total up to 800 or more. Of these graduates it is clear that half remained in the state, and of those about one in seven in towns with a population of 25,000 people. What a dramatic improvement this represents for rural Alabama, but it is a work in progress.

I’ve learned over my years in medicine and working with medical education that training enough medical manpower with the proper mix of specialties can be a fragile thing. We would have to appeal all the links in the education chain in places like the University to train family physicians for rural areas—working with high schools, with college premed students, with medical students, and finally providing some of the best family practice residency training in the country. But taking a look at the Convocation Issue of On Rounds, the CCHS publication which came out a couple of weeks ago, tells us that all is not well. Of the twenty-five fine looking medical students who graduate from the Tuscaloosa program, only one is entering a family practice residency. Interestingly, four are going into anesthesiology residencies.

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Please note that the list above may contain inaccuracies or omissions. (2003) 346-0993 or Wliston@cccc.edu
Ed Shackleford, 2003 residency graduate, is now in Lewisburg, TN, a town of about 10,000 between Huntsville and Nashville. "I am in a group with a med/peds and an internist... very nice, and I've continued to learn a lot, though the q3 calls with 4 day weekend calls is a little long," he says. "I see probably about 60% adolescents and children, and 40% adults. I do both inpatient and outpatient; the hospital even has a small but well equipped 4-bed ICU. I have been busy enough that I have already seen some very atypical diseases and problems, and my main regret is that I didn't read a lot more in residency when I had more time."

His address is 769 Joyce Avenue, Lewisburg, TN 37091, and his office is at 1090 North Ellington Parkway. He still has his UAB e-mail address: shack@uab.edu.

Catherine Skinner, a 2003 residency graduate, sent greetings from Austin, Texas, where she is doing an obstetrics fellowship. She said she is planning to return to rural Alabama in the fall (still "negotiating," she said) and wrote to request the date of this year's Rural Health Conference to include in scheduling her CME activities for the year. The conference will be April 29-30, 2004, at the Bryant Center; and Leslie Zganjar, Assistant Director of the Institute for Rural Health Research at CCHS, sent her the information you can find on page 2 of this issue of OnRounds.

David Tutten (Residency grad, 1992) and his wife Cindy (center) have become medical missionaries with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Following language study in Nairobi, Kenya, they will work at Kigoma Baptist hospital in Tanzania. They left the States for Africa on January 8, 2004. They were accompanied by their children, Paige, 14, and Tyler, 12. Their 20-year-old daughter, Amanda, is a senior at Judice College. You can contact the Tutens at: dtuten02@hotmail.com

Please return the alumni update form on the back cover to share your news about yourself and your practice.
The Tuscaloosa program consists of two parts:

- The medical student program, providing the last two years of medical education for University of Alabama School of Medicine students—clinical training in primary health care, family medicine, community medicine, or many other specialties. Students receive these experiences at the Capstone Medical Center, the University's ambulatory clinic, and DCH Regional Medical Center.

- The well-established Family Practice Residency, which is a three-year training program for newly graduated physicians specializing in family practice.

The mission of the College is carried out by a dedicated cadre of 35 full-time and more than 60 part-time faculty members. Their teaching efforts are augmented by more than 160 area physicians and medical professionals who voluntarily support the efforts of the College in the communities where they live and work. The commitment and zeal of this dedicated group has helped shape the College.

Turning to the University of Alabama for a comprehensive solution to the need for improved health care delivery in these areas, the Alabama Legislature funded the University of Kentucky in 1972 to lead the program as its first dean. Dr. David Willard, a nationally recognized leader in community and family medicine, who came from the University of Kentucky in 1972 to lead the program as its first dean. Dr. Willard became the first dean of the College.

The College became official with the arrival of Dr. David Willard, a nationally recognized leader in community and family medicine, who came from the University of Kentucky in 1972 to lead the program as its first dean. Dr. Willard became the first dean of the College.

The College of Community Health Sciences was established to meet the needs of the state: family medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology, psychiatry, public health, and community health. A residency in Family Medicine, a new field of medicine, was begun within two years. The first class of medical students graduated in 1976.

Over 30 Years of Excellence

The University of Alabama’s College of Community Health Sciences (CCHS) is now into its third decade of addressing the unique problems associated with rural health care in Alabama. Access to quality health care has long been recognized as a critical component of community health. Yet in rural areas, physicians and medical facilities have often been in short supply, resulting in higher death rates, more disease, and a lower quality of life.

By training skilled practitioners of medicine for careers in primary care, the College is helping make health care accessible throughout the state. The College has seen similar successes: 54 percent of those graduates have chosen careers in primary care. The College has also not strayed from its original commitment: to improve health care in Alabama.

Our Achievements

In the 32 years the program has been under way, the College has made significant strides in making health care more available and accessible in the state. More than 450 practitioners have received their third- and fourth-year clinical training at CCHS. Of those graduates, 52 percent have chosen careers in primary care. Among those who choose to specialize in other areas of medicine, preparatory to primary care.

The College’s residency program has seen similar successes: 54 percent of those who completed their training at CCHS are practicing in Alabama, and 55 percent are in the Southeast. Of these, more than half are practicing in towns with fewer than 25,000 residents.

The College has implemented other successful programs to attract even more family physicians to serve the state. The Rural Health Scholars Program, and the Rural Medical Scholars Program were developed in the past decade to guide rural students into careers in health care. Hundreds of high school and college students from 59 Alabama counties have taken advantage of these programs.

In 1999, the College continued its commitment to rural research by establishing an annual Rural Health Conference dedicated to identifying issues and proposing options for improving the health of people in rural areas. With an attendance of close to 300 each year, the conference has become the forum for rural health matters.

Also, the College has seen significant gains in access to health care in Alabama. Access to health care has long been an issue in rural areas, where many rural areas have limited access to health care. The College has continued its commitment to improving access to health care in rural areas, and has seen significant gains in access to health care in Alabama.

Another exciting achievement of the College is the groundbreaking for the College’s new home, a 7,000-square-foot facility that will combine all the College’s academic activities at one location. This centralization will promote the continued growth and success of the College, and will allow students and patients easier access, and provide resources for expanded collaboration with other colleges within the University, such as the College of Commerce and Business Administration, Capstone College of Nursing, the School of Social Work, and the School of Environmental Sciences.

During the past 30 years, the College of Community Health Sciences has contributed greatly to improved health care in the state. The College has continued to address the unique problems associated with rural health care in Alabama by training skilled medical practitioners for the future.

-Patricia West, History of CCHS

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