A conversation with Michael McCloud, M.D.

By David Eastis

Physician Michael K. McCloud recalls the incident fondly. On one typical Saturday evening about two years ago, he received a telephone call. A woman who recently had moved to a retirement community began experiencing painful symptoms of a urinary infection. Because she recently relocated she had no local physician in the area yet. A friend who is a patient of McCloud’s encouraged the ailing woman to call him for assistance.

McCloud, a UC Davis clinical professor of medicine, readily agreed to see the woman – at her home. After stopping by his office to pick up urine testing equipment, he arrived at her seniors’ complex within the hour. On the stairs to her third-floor apartment, a passing resident spotted the well-worn black medical bag in McCloud’s hand. The woman stopped him to comment, “That looks just like one of those old-fashioned bags doctors used to take on house calls.”

This year McCloud marked his 10th anniversary as a clinician educator on the faculty of the UC Davis Department of Medicine, in the Division of General Medicine. And while he still makes numerous evening and weekend patient calls, not just his black bag but also a medical student is likely to be in tow.

“We have a critical shortage of physicians and nurses with training in the special needs of the elderly,” notes McCloud. With the shortage projected to even worsen, McCloud has shifted the focus of his work to encouraging and teaching the next generation of physicians and physician extenders the skills and sensitivity necessary to treat our most vulnerable adult population.

Medical students who have spent a one-month clerkship rounding with McCloud are unanimous in their laudatory evaluations of the rotation.

“Dr. McCloud is an exceptional physician as both a teacher and a role model,” says fourth-year UC Davis medical student Mamta Parikh, who completed a clerkship with McCloud. “His medical acumen coupled with his empathy for his patients gave me a bar that I can only hope to keep reaching as I go through my training. His enthusiasm and passion for what he does is an asset to his patients. It is so important for medical students to be exposed to physicians like Dr. McCloud. In addition to serving as an excellent role model, his love of what he does is infectious and encourages students to look within themselves to find their own calling.”

McCloud’s other great passion is educating the community to prepare for aging, and to help them learn about the diseases associated with aging. He is well known for his acclaimed program “Aging and Medical Science: A Mini Medical School to Prepare for Life’s Second Half.” The program, which McCloud has pre-

Continued on page 2
sented annually since 2002, consists of classes taught by UC Davis faculty members and clinicians with expertise in nutrition, cardiovascular health, hearing, vision, bone and joint problems, and other topics.

Prominent Sacramento businessman and avid community volunteer Fred “Fritz” Harrold of the Harrold Ford dealership is a 2009 graduate of the UC Davis Mini Medical School and now is a member of the program’s community advisory board. Harrold marvels at McCloud’s spirit and diligence in balancing a heavy patient caseload, teaching responsibilities and commitment to the community.

“Dr. McCloud’s dedication and passion for medicine are obvious. He is the constant inspiration for the Mini Medical School, which has achieved fame for its method of teaching the over-50 crowd by mixing humor with an intensive and condensed medical curriculum of issues facing our older population,” says Harrold. “Many myths and misleading medical advertisements are refuted in layman’s terms. I learned information vital to maintaining optimal health.”

McCloud’s passion for educating community members to prepare for aging, and to learn about the diseases associated with aging, originated years ago. He conducted scores of community workshops and lectures before devising the Mini Medical School concept.

He remembers one instance in 1995, while he was on a three-year sabbatical from practice that included study and research at Duke and Yale universities. He was invited to a church in Knoxville, Tenn., to give a morning talk on Alzheimer’s disease. To his great surprise, 500 individuals had packed the church sanctuary, hoping to understand this peculiar new disease which their own doctors did not seem to fully grasp. He realized that he could make a difference by making complex and at times frightening medical information understandable to the lay public.

Since that time, McCloud has given approximately 150 invited lectures and workshops to the community, as well as to physician groups, elder law attorneys, government groups, and industry. His community outreach has been the subject of several magazine and newspaper articles. His discussion with writer Gitta Morris about “practical geriatrics for an aging nation” was the subject of a Sunday New York Times half-page feature story. McCloud appeared recently on CBS evening news in a segment on “Geriatricians: Preserving Life.”

McCloud has been honored by the Alzheimer’s Association for his board work and other contributions. The California State Senate presented him with a commendation for service to the community and for innovative program development.

Assemblymember Mariko Yamada, Chair of the California State Assembly Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care, praises McCloud’s dedication to the health care of older populations.

“Dr. McCloud is an extraordinary physician-educator, practicing and teaching in that all-too-rare medical specialty of geriatrics. His scientific and instructional skills are surpassed only by his unique talent in engaging students of all ages through his innovative approach to healthy aging,” Yamada said. “His ability to combine health and humor has changed the course of many lives in the Sacramento region, including mine, and for that I will be eternally grateful.”

McCloud, while on the go and carrying his black bag, cheerfully agreed to answer a few questions for Pass the Torch readers.

Q. Your old-fashioned black medical bag is a distinguishing characteristic. When did you begin using it?

A. I get a lot of comments about the black bag. It has been my portable medical office for
more than three decades, since I opened a private internal medicine and geriatric practice in San Francisco in 1979. It has seen me through several hundred home and convalescent hospital visits, and has been misplaced only a couple of times. I keep planning to put an identification tag on the bag, but people pretty much know it’s mine.

Q. Isn’t longevity mostly a function of heredity?

A. Heredity does play a role, and I advise you to be born into the right family. If you have a parent who lived beyond 90 years of age, it does add longevity. Otherwise, parental longevity is a poor predictor of your remaining years. In actuality, our lifestyle choices are a better predictor of our “health span,” or years of life free of disability and chronic illness. I’m less interested in hearing your answer to the question “Did your parents live to an old age?” than your answer to the question “Do you want French fries with that order?”

Q. How important are diet and exercise in attaining healthy aging? How often do we need to exercise?

A. In every laboratory animal studied, caloric restriction and increased activity add longevity. I recommend exercise and physical activity at least on the days that you eat.

Q. Do you practice what you teach?

A. We are walking during this conversation, aren’t we?

Q. Some of your students and residents have elected to specialize in geriatrics. How do you get them excited about caring for older adults?

A. I let my patients do the job. They are certainly what sold me on the specialty.

Q. Your “humor with a message” has you in demand as a speaker. Is there one take-home message you like to give?

A. Yes. I encourage individuals to become more informed about the aging process, preventive measures, and especially the medications they take. I know people who will pore over consumer magazines before purchasing a small appliance, but will take Mighty Mango Liver Cleanser because their daughter recommended it.

Q. How can people sort out reliable health information from advertising and hucksterism?

A. There are some terrific sources of reliable and unbiased information on aging and health. The UC Berkeley Wellness Letter and the Johns Hopkins Health After 50 newsletter are two of my favorites.

Continued on page 5
A message from Timothy E. Albertson, M.D., MPH

Kudos and an invitation to support our best and brightest physicians

I have had the honor of serving during the past year as interim chair of the Department of Internal Medicine following the promotion of my good friend, Dr. Fred Meyers, who was my predecessor in this position for 12 years. One of the distinct pleasures of this position is presentation of the M.D. People's Choice Awards at the Department of Medicine's annual Academic Forum, our flagship public event.

The Academic Forum enables us to publicly acknowledge the outstanding research and scholarly achievements of our best physicians in training, and to introduce them to our community supporters, to patients whom we've served, and to generous donors who make so many of our program enhancements possible. We call them “People's Choice Awards” because the winners are chosen through votes by community supporters who examine research poster presentations at the Academic Forum.

Each spring, we honor three of our talented residents and fellows who have conducted insightful scholarly medical research. This year’s People’s Choice Award winners are shown in photos on pages 7 and 15 of this newsletter.

These bright physicians in training represent the heart of our education mission, and embody the future of medical knowledge and health care. To those of you who were there, I thank you for helping make the event a success. And if you have not attended an Academic Forum, I hope you will consider joining us next spring. Watch for more information in the next edition of Pass the Torch.

While the Academic Forum draws attention to our young physicians in training, another topic dear to my heart is the devotion of my esteemed colleague Michael McCloud to health care of our elder citizens.

Dr. McCloud is a geriatrician who is dedicated to helping adults maintain optimal wellness after age 65. He has helped untold numbers of people – not only his own patients, but also literally thousands of people who have attended the UC Davis “Mini Medical School to Prepare for Life’s Second Half.” He alone envisioned this phenomenal community education concept and mobilized the forces to make it an enormously successful reality. Among those who also deserve thanks are the Mini Medial School community advisory council members, including Assemblymember Mariko Yamada, Fred Harrold of Harrold Ford, Craig McMurray of Capital Public Radio, Frank Vincent, Eva Long, Ph.D., Darby Patterson and many others.

The graduates of the Mini Medical School range from age 18 to 93 – illustrating that its appeal encompasses not only elders but also people who are, as Dr. McCloud says, “seniors-in-waiting.” I welcome you to read more about Dr. McCloud and discover 14 of his hints for healthy aging on page 6 of this edition of Pass the Torch.

I hope you will consider contributing to support our important education fund, as well as to support cancer research studies of Dr. Ted Wun, chief of our Division of Hematology and Oncology. On page 8 of this newsletter, you can read how Dr. Wun, who is a professor of pathology and laboratory medicine, correctly diagnosed and effectively treated Rebecca Robinson’s Hodgkin’s lymphoma.

We recognize the extraordinary value of physician-educators, such as Drs. McCloud and Wun and many other faculty who inspire medical students, residents and fellows with their commitment, energy, creativity and skill.

The UC Davis Department of Medicine is one of the nation’s most productive and dynamic centers of academic medicine, as well as the largest department in the UC Davis Health System. The department’s physicians and staff are dedicated to the compassionate practice of medicine – a continuum of care that encompasses preventive medicine, acute care and palliative care.

We thank all of our community supporters, grateful patients, donors, faculty, residents and fellows and staff for all you do to make the Department of Medicine’s life-changing mission possible.

Yours in service,

Timothy E. Albertson, M.D., MPH
Three overlooked and excellent online resources are the Department of Health and Human Services’ healthfinder.gov, the National Library of Medicine’s medlineplus.gov, and the American College of Physicians’ acponline.org/patients_families websites.

Q. Your small consultation office in the Ellison Ambulatory Care Center is well known. It is a gallery of floor-to-ceiling photographic portraits of culturally diverse elderly people. Did you photograph them yourself?

A. All but one. The woman skydiving to celebrate her 80th birthday gave me the photo when she returned the hip protectors I lent her for the event. She signed the photograph “I did it! Lois.”

Q. When you created the UC Davis “Mini Medical School to Prepare for Life’s Second Half,” did you anticipate such a popular program? Over the years, more than 3,000 people have enrolled in the program. I did not anticipate such demand. In 2002, we expected about 75 attendees to a one-time series of classes, and had to move to a larger venue after the first 200 individuals called for admission. For whatever reason, it struck a respondent chord. The other surprise has been the multigenerational appeal, with students ranging from their 20s to 90s.

Q. How has the Mini Medical School program become so successful?

A. Truthfully, it has been the commitment and passion of our extraordinary faculty, along with a team of tireless volunteers. The energy of these “true believers” brings me back every year.

Q. How many Mini Medical School classes have you attended yourself?

A. All 54. And I still learn something from each. The classes are too good to miss one.

Q. You give an inspiring toast to your Mini Medical School graduates each year. How did you toast the Class of 2010?

A. My toast was “May each of you one day reminisce about old age.” Michael McCloud says he plans to carry that black bag for another three decades.

David Eastis is chief development officer for the Department of Medicine. During the past three years, he has raised more than $7 million for the department, including strong support for the Mini Medical School in collaboration with Michael McCloud, M.D. Eastis authored the book “7” about the popularity and significance of the number 7.

The accoutrements of medical doctors these days include electronic pagers, lab coats and digital instruments. In years past, however, physicians were most readily identified by the medical bags they carried. When doctors made “house calls” to the homes of patients, they toted a medical bag to carry medical equipment and supplies.

In the 19th century, physicians traveled with their leather medical bag by horse and buggy, or on horseback using medical saddlebags.

A physician’s bag typically might contain a stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, glucometer, tongue depressors, a reflex hammer, syringes, tourniquet, forceps, scalpel, scissors, cotton balls and bandages; hand cleanser and antibiotic and antibacterial drugs; and medications to treat asthma, dehydration or other potential medical emergencies.

House calls remained common through the 1950s, when the Pressman Toy Co. introduced a popular toy “doctor’s bag” containing simulated medical gear to help children feel more at ease when the family physician came calling.

Antique medical bags are highly prized among collectors. Manufacturers continue to produce medical bags made of various synthetic materials. They’re used most commonly today in rural settings and by physicians who cater to specialized needs, as Michael McCloud does.
Michael McCloud’s 14 hints for healthy aging

1. Diet and exercise? Sure, they are important. But they are only two legs of the healthy aging tripod. The third is sleep. An extra 30 minutes of sleep each night can help stave off hypertension, heart attacks and depression. Some evidence indicates that increasing sleep may even boost immunity.

2. When was the last time you met a thriving elderly person who got that way through taking food supplements?

3. Any diet that can truly enhance longevity must contain these three words: moderation, variety, balance.

4. Do you have some new, annoying symptom? Before asking what medicine you should take for it, ask which medicine you should stop because of it.

5. If you have a chronic medical condition, become an unabashed authority on it.

6. A well kept, unambiguous chart of all medications taken can protect you from medication misadventures. Don’t list “Coumadin 2,” for example. Say “Coumadin (warfarin) 2 mg, taking two tabs (= 4mg) daily. Anticoagulant.”

7. Create moments of activity throughout the day, and you will have exercised without realizing it. A good day’s workout might include choosing stairs rather than an elevator, getting some gardening in, dancing, and having that important conversation over a walk.

8. Go to the doctor’s office not to learn your blood pressure, but to show your blood pressure. Show the average of a dozen readings from home. Occasionally check it both sitting and standing – it should not drop more than 15 to 20 points.

9. Look at the skin of your outer forearm. Does it reveal your age? Then look at the sun-protected inner forearm. Look younger? So why not sun-protect the rest of you?

10. The number one reason for loss of independence is a hip fracture. Wearing hip protectors, avoiding multifocal eyeglasses when walking or stair climbing, reducing medications and alcohol, and wearing secure footwear all lessen risk of a nursing home in your future.

11. Have your vitamin D and vitamin B-12 blood levels checked. Identifying and correcting actual deficiencies of either may prevent disabling illness in the future.

12. Do you love playing bridge? Take piano lessons. Is golf your passion? Learn Italian. An aging brain becomes more resilient when challenged to take on unfamiliar skills and tasks.

13. There may be some stay-at-home individuals who age well without involvement in the community. I haven’t met any, though.

14. Are you a cigarette smoker? The above tips won’t work for you. But the benefits of stopping accrue rapidly.

For many more hints to successful aging and to learn about the Mini Medical School, visit www.agewell.ucdavis.edu on the Web.
Each year, the Department of Internal Medicine presents an “Academic Forum,” a celebratory event to recognize the best and brightest of our physicians in training. By vote, attendees at the forum select the residents and fellows on the basis of their research presentations on display at the event. The winners of these “People’s Choice” Awards at this year’s Academic Forum in May gathered with Department of Medicine leaders. The honorees are: Lynne Do, M.D., whose research study found that “Significantly more adenomas are seen on screening colonoscopy with water infusion”; Michael Schivo, M.D., who studied “Metabolomic analysis of exhaled breath for the differentiation of asthma and COPD”; and Paul Hoffman, M.D., who investigated “Pulmonary infiltrates with eosinophilia presenting as heart failure.”
When Rebecca Robinson began experiencing back pain in 1995 as she entered her mid-30s, she thought that she had strained or twisted some muscles. Even though she curtailed activity in an attempt to let her back heal, the pain persisted and became more severe. Her family practice physician was unable to resolve the problem, but suspected a possible cause and referred Robinson to Ted Wun, M.D., a professor of pathology and laboratory medicine and chief of the Division of Hematology and Oncology for the UC Davis Health System.

The referral initially puzzled Robinson because hematologists specialize in diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs, and she couldn’t imagine how he could improve her aching back. The connection became clear after laboratory tests revealed that she had Hodgkin’s lymphoma (formerly known as Hodgkin’s disease), a cancer of the lymphatic system. The lymph system produces white blood cells, and filters and drains waste products from all the organs of the body.

Wun patiently helped Robinson overcome her initial shock about her diagnosis, and alleviated her fears and apprehensions by reassuring her that Hodgkin’s lymphoma fortunately responds well to radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatment. He explained in detail the progression of the illness, the treatment options available to her, what she should expect to experience, and offered recommendations. Confident in Wun’s prognosis and his expertise in treating hematologic malignancies, Robinson agreed to an aggressive chemotherapy regimen.

“I can’t adequately convey how reassuring it was to hear that not only was I in good hands, but also that I was being treated by one of the leading doctors in the country who specializes in hematologic malignancies and in bone marrow transplants,” Robinson said.

Her arduous treatment was effective.

“Through it all, the doctors and nurses at the UC Davis Medical Center were compassionate and dedicated to my care,” Robinson said. “To this day, I have confidence in my treatment options within the UC Davis Medical Center and, I think equally important, I have confidence in their health-care system as a whole.”

Following treatment, she was able to resume her career, and now is executive director of Zinfandel Advocates & Producers (ZAP), a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to the recognition and appreciation of zinfandel wines (www.zinfandel.org). ZAP’s fundraising efforts, which take place during their Zinfandel Festival each January, include donating more than $350,000 to date for research undertaken within the Department of Viticulture and Enology at UC Davis to preserve old-vine Zinfandel for future generations. ZAP has also established student scholarships for advanced wine education at various schools, universities and culinary institutions.

“The priorities in my life haven’t changed since I was diagnosed those many years ago. I remain incredibly blessed on so many fronts, and do my best to treasure every day,” said Robinson, who remains in regular contact with Wun. “Dr. Wun remains a kind-hearted friend and an important part of my life,” Robinson said.
Cardiologist Ezra Amsterdam receives research award

When cardiology patients are hospitalized at the UC Davis Medical Center, they come under the purview of cardiologist Ezra Amsterdam, M.D. And they’re in experienced hands.

Amsterdam, professor of internal medicine and associate chief for Academic Affairs in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, has more than 40 years of patient care to his credit. He specializes in the management and prevention of coronary artery disease, noninvasive diagnostic methods and exercise testing and training.

Amsterdam, who also is associate director of chest pain emergency services and associate director of the coronary care unit, has received the 2010 School of Medicine Research Award. The award includes a $15,000 fellowship.

His research contributions are extensive and include the remarkable total of 540 scientific papers and seven books. Amsterdam founded and edits Preventive Cardiology, the first journal devoted to this subject, and he has been a member of the editorial boards of multiple leading cardiology journals. He is in demand as a lecturer and visiting professor nationally and internationally.

Reginald Low, M.D., chief of the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, calls Amsterdam’s enduring record of service and scholarship inspirational.

“Throughout his four decades of service, Dr. Amsterdam has advanced knowledge and has enlightened the medical community with his insightful findings. Hundreds of students, residents, fellows and patients have had the good fortune of benefiting from his wisdom,” Low said.

Recognition of Amsterdam’s teaching contributions is reflected by honors that include the Raymond D. Bahr Award of Excellence 2010 by the Society of Chest Pain Centers. He has also received the Gifted Teacher Award of the American College of Cardiology, the Distinguished Teacher Award of UC Davis for Graduate and Professional Education, the Joseph Stokes III Award from the American Society for Preventive Cardiology in recognition of research and education concerning the prevention of cardiovascular disease, and numerous other awards.

One former student wrote, “This experience in clinical research with Dr. Amsterdam was, from start to finish, a fantastic culmination of my medical school education.”

“Dr. Amsterdam is a rare treasure: He models to his students, houses-staff and colleagues an infectious love of medicine and superb expertise in cardiology that combines the best of classic bedside clinical skills with the generation and judicious application of new knowledge,” said his long-time colleague, Faith Fitzgerald, M.D., professor of internal medicine.

Amsterdam continues his active roles on committees of the American College of Cardiology, the American Heart Association, and the Society of Chest Pain Centers and as an invited lecturer at their national meetings.

Rice farmer Gerald McDermott creates $1.5 million estate gift

The members of what has become known as the “greatest generation” are revered for their willingness to interrupt their lives to come to the aid of our nation on the field of battle. One such American was Gerald L. McDermott. McDermott was a young man when he left his family’s home in rural Maxwell, Calif., to serve in World War II as a tail gunner in North Africa with the 319th Bombardment Group, which was decorated with two Distinguished Unit Citations.

Later in life, McDermott again answered a call – this time to advance health care by helping fund medical education. McDermott, who died in 2009, made a $1.5 million estate gift to the UC Davis Department of Internal Medicine. It likely will evolve into an endowed fund that leads to creation of an endowed chair in prostate cancer research under the direction of Frederick J. Meyers, M.D., MACP, who oversaw McDermott’s health care for 18 years. The endowment will furnish funding annually for two medical students.

Continued on page 10
to conduct medical research under the direction of Meyers, who guided the UC Davis Department of Internal Medicine for 12 years before becoming the school's executive associate dean in May 2009. McDermott also donated a $100,000 annuity, which resulted in a $36,000 gift last year.

Gerald McDermott was born and raised in the small rice farming town of Maxwell, about 70 miles northwest of Sacramento in Colusa County. His grandfather James McDermott had established the family's rice farm, and it was passed down to Gerald's parents, Melvin and Ivy Ruby. They lost everything during the Great Depression and were in the process of rebuilding by raising rice and turkeys when World War II broke out.

After Melvin died, Gerald continued farming the land. When Ruby became frail, the family hired a young woman, Beth Johnson, to stay at the McDermott home to care for her. McDermott and Johnson took a liking to each other, started dating and eventually became lifelong companions. They met often for lunch at the Maxwell Inn. They began spending weekends in Reno together and, on one memorable vacation trip, took a cruise ship to Mexico. They derived much pleasure from spending time together with Johnson's seven grandchildren.

Fred Meyers became McDermott's physician in 1992, and a fast friendship developed between them. Johnson speaks glowingly about Meyers' attentiveness.

“Even after medical treatment was complete, Dr. Meyers would call and visit often, normally accompanied by his wife, Linda,” Johnson said. “Gerald was so precious to me and to my entire family. Both he and I were grateful to Dr. Meyers and to the UC Davis Medical Center for the outstanding care he received through the years.” She said that McDermott valued Meyers' friendship as much as his medical acumen.

“Dr. Meyers helped save Gerald's life from cancer, and remained Gerald's close friend for the last 15 years of his life,” Johnson added.

Meyers achieved prominence as a nationally respected expert in hematology and oncology, and as an influential specialist in cancer molecular biology, metastatic cancer, and end-of-life care and pain management. The American Cancer Society named Meyers the recipient of the organization's prestigious 2010 Lane Adams Quality of Life Award, which recognizes excellence in “compassionate care and support to individuals with cancer.” Such was the care that Meyers gave to McDermott.

The friendship between the two men emanated from mutual respect. Meyers said that McDermott will be remembered in perpetuity for the creation of his legacy gifts.

“Gerald McDermott was a true hero, not only for his military service but also for his altruism in making his visionary gifts. I am proud to have known him as a patient, and I will always retain fond memories of him as a friend. Through the generosity of Gerald's gift, medical students and other grateful patients will come to know him as well,” said Meyers.
Elisa Tong, M.D., receives Landgraf Award

Elisa K. Tong, an assistant professor of internal medicine, has received the Christine and Helen S. Landgraf Memorial Research Award, which supports cancer research at UC Davis. Tong, who conducts research in tobacco control, has expertise in tobacco industry scientific issues, tobacco behavior and cessation, secondhand smoke, and Asian populations. The Landgraf Award, established in 1973, honors Christine Landgraf, who died in 1971 of Hodgkin's disease at the age of 27. In her memory, her parents, John and Helen Landgraf, donated $5,000 to help support cancer research at UC Davis.

Amir Zeki, M.D., and Natalie Yuen honored for outstanding research

UC Davis physician Amir Zeki and graduate student Natalie Yuen have received Richard C. Woodard Awards to support their continued investigations of the pathophysiology and treatment of diabetes mellitus and metabolic disorders. Zeki received his award in recognition of his paper, “Simvastatin Inhibits Airway Hyperreactivity: Implications for the Mevalonate Pathway and Beyond,” published in the October 2009 issue of the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine. He is an assistant professor of pulmonary and critical care medicine whose research with mice has shown that statin drugs could be effective in relieving asthma and other inflammatory airway diseases.

The award recognized Yuen, a graduate student researcher in physiology and membrane biology, for her study titled “Cerebral Metabolic Alterations in Rats with Diabetes Ketoacidosis,” which was published in the March 2010 issue of Diabetes. Her investigation demonstrated that standard insulin and intravenous fluid treatments for diabetic ketoacidosis can exacerbate brain metabolic abnormalities, which can be reduced by bumetanide, a diuretic medication ordinarily used for treatment of edema.

Funding for the annual awards is furnished by Elizabeth D. Woodard, a physician from Rochester, N.Y., who established the Richard C. Woodard Memorial Endowed Fund in honor of her husband, who died of diabetes-related heart disease.

John Rutledge, professor of cardiovascular medicine and a member of the award selection committee, said, “The fund established by Dr. Woodard helps us encourage talented, early-career investigators who are doing the kind of innovative work that will help us expand treatment options for serious illnesses.”

In addition, Zeki was among the recipients of a K12 research grant, a three-year award from UCDMC’s NIH-sponsored Clinical and Translational Science Center (CTSC), to study whether statins are a potential new therapy in asthma.

Tonya Fancher, M.D., works for the underserved

Tonya Fancher, M.D., an assistant professor of internal medicine, and associate program director for the department’s residency training program, focuses her energies on improving care for underserved populations. She directs UC Davis’ Transforming Education and Community Health (TEACH) Program that links inpatient care at the UC Davis Health System with the Internal Medicine Resident Clinic at the Sacramento County Primary Care Center so that Sacramento County uninsured patients can receive continuity of care.

Fancher was selected as the first recipient of the Putnam Scholars Program, sponsored by the American Academy on Communication in Healthcare. The Putnam grant recognizes excellence in education and research in physician-patient communication. Fancher received the grant for her proposed project focusing on improvement of interaction and understanding between physicians and patients.

Continued on page 12
patients within the Southeast Asian community of Sacramento County.

“We are excited to name Tonya Fancher as the first recipient of the Putnam Scholarship because her work truly reflects the life and vision of Dr. Samuel Morse Putnam, who recognized early on the critical importance of the patient-physician relationship in both healing and effective health care,” said Norman Jensen, the academy’s president. “I know he would be very impressed by the work Dr. Fancher is doing to address the challenges doctors face when their patients speak a different language and come from a different culture.”

The Asian community accounts for 14 percent of county residents. Fancher also works with the UC Davis Asian American Center for Disparities Research to improve health care for Hmong and Vietnamese patients with depression.

“Dr. Fancher is an exceptional young physician-leader in medical education and health communication,” said Richard Kravitz, professor and co-vice chair of research in the Department of Internal Medicine. “The Putnam Scholars award will invigorate her creative work by facilitating interactions with a superb national network of mentors and advisors.”

The California Region of the Society of General Internal Medicine awarded Fancher its 2008 “Outstanding Community Service” award.

She is developing plans to educate the local medical community about the predominant cultural beliefs, history and acculturation challenges facing Southeast Asians in the region. According to the most recent census, a language other than English is spoken in one in four households in Sacramento County. The focus on good communication with non-English speaking patients also reflects a UC Davis Health System priority of improving both access and quality of care for underserved populations.

Fancher says she believes that “giving back to the community is a part of the practice of medicine. All people deserve high-quality health care.”

David Gandara, M.D., awarded $425,000

David R. Gandara, professor of hematology and oncology in the Department of Medicine, has received $425,000 in research funding from the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer. Gandara, who is associate director for clinical research, has expertise in lung cancer and development of new anti-cancer therapies. He also is director of the UC Davis Cancer Center’s thoracic oncology program.

Gandara has broad expertise in development of new anti-cancer therapies, as principal investigator of the NCI-sponsored California Cancer Consortium and chair of the Lung Committee of the NCI-sponsored Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG). His clinical trials include the use of molecular targeted agents in patients with different kinds of cancer. His research focuses on personalized approaches to cancer therapy using pharmacogenomic profiling.

Immunologist Judy Van de Water receives $149,000 award

The Jane Botsford Johnson Foundation has awarded $149,000 to support the autism-related research that immunologist Judy Van de Water is conducting. Van de Water, a professor of rheumatology, allergy and clinical immunology, is studying the immunobiology of autism, and the interaction between the immune and neuronal systems during development. The award was made in recognition of her ongoing work to define the maternal immune response during gestation and how that affects neurodevelopment.

Van de Water and her colleagues have discovered and patented a biomarker in the form of maternal autoantibodies to fetal brain proteins found only in mothers of children with autism. This biomarker, which is found in up to 17 percent of mothers whose children have autism, is under development as a prenatal test. Van de Water also has made significant discoveries about primary biliary cirrhosis, systemic lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis, progressive systemic sclerosis and other immunological disorders.

Team led by Amparo Villablanca, M.D., receives $1.5 million NIH grant

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has selected a UC Davis School of Medicine research team led by cardiologist Amparo C. Villablanca to receive one of only 14 grants nationwide to fund investigation of factors that influence the success of female medical scientists. The NIH awarded $1.27 million to the UC Davis team to conduct a four-year study titled “Women’s Careers in the Medical Sciences and Family-Friendly Policies.”

Villablanca, principal investigator for the UC Davis study, is collaborating with co-principal investigator Lydia P. Howell and co-investigator Laurel A. Beckett. They
comprise one of just two research teams on the West Coast who are receiving funding under the grant program.

A professor of cardiovascular medicine and holder of the Lazda Chair in Women’s Cardiovascular Medicine, Villablanca directs the Women’s Cardiovascular Medicine Program and is associate director of the UC Davis Women’s Center for Health. Howell is a professor and interim chair of the Department of Pathology and director of anatomic pathology.

Ted Wun, M.D., promoted to serve as chief of Hematology and Oncology

Dr. Wun has been appointed chief of the Division of Hematology and Oncology at the UC Davis School of Medicine. He will continue to serve as chief, Section of Hematology and Oncology for the VA Northern California Health Care System. His career has been primarily in medical education and clinical translational research. He is the recipient of several teaching awards, including one of the inaugural UC Davis Health System Excellence In Education Awards. He helped develop an innovative research rotation for residents and oversees educational sessions for the NIH-funded UC Davis Clinical Translational Sciences Center. His primary areas of research have been in the epidemiology of cancer-associated thrombosis and sickle cell disease, and he is a national authority in these areas. For the first decade of his career he was part of the clinical stem cell transplant program and focused on hematological malignancies. He was also program director for the Hematology Oncology Fellowship Program between 1998 to 2010. Dr. Wun is a sought-after consultant for benign and malignant hematological disorders in the Sacramento region.

Dr. Wun has served on the UC Davis faculty since 1993.

Sidika Karakas, M.D., named chief of Division of Endocrinology

Professor Sidika E. Kasim-Karakas has been appointed chief of the Division of Endocrinology, Clinical Nutrition and Vascular Medicine. Karakas, who is board-certified in medicine and in endocrinology and metabolism, is an expert in treatment of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), a female endocrine disorder.

Timothy Albertson, chair of the Department of Internal Medicine, said, “We believe Dr. Karakas has the qualities and the vision that will continue to foster and promote excellent research, teaching and patient care from the division.”

Karakas has been a member of the UC Davis faculty since 1992.

Mayoral honor: Department of Internal Medicine leaders gathered after Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson presented them with a resolution in honor of Joe Sullivan, who donated his estate, including his home, to the Department of Medicine. Shown here in Johnson’s office are (from left): Drew Ingram, M.D., chief resident; Zach Holt, M.D., chief resident; Susan Murin, M.D., professor and vice chair of internal medicine for clinical medicine; Timothy Albertson, M.D., MPH, interim chair of the Department of Internal Medicine; Mark Henderson, M.D., who is professor and vice chair, residency program director, and associate dean for admissions and outreach; Sharon De Cruz, M.D., chief resident; and Justin Oldham, M.D., chief resident. Learn about Joe Sullivan and his generosity at www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/internalmedicine/giving/sullivan.html on the Web. (Photo by Caroline Thompson).
The UC Davis Department of Medicine is one of the nation’s most productive and dynamic centers of academic medicine as well as the largest department in the UC Davis Health System. Our academic and clinical team members conduct comprehensive patient services and cutting-edge research in a variety of specialties, including infectious and immunologic diseases, cardiovascular medicine, endocrinology and critical care. The department’s physicians and staff are dedicated to the compassionate practice of medicine – a continuum of care that encompasses preventive medicine, acute care and palliative care.

The symbolism of lighting and passing the torch exemplifies the fundamental mission of the Department of Internal Medicine. At the core of our being is our desire not only to prevent and treat illness and injury, but also to inspire and enlighten subsequent generations from all walks of life to perpetuate the ideals that we hold so dear. We seek to attract and educate the best and brightest young people who wish to dedicate themselves to the field of medicine. As important as is our work, their endeavors will be all the more consequential. Our society needs the full benefit of the bright, inquisitive minds of young scientists and clinicians to study the deepest mysteries of human anatomy, to solve the medical puzzles that have eluded us until now, and to improve upon the techniques that we have developed – all with the intention of helping to improve the quality of life for people throughout the world. For all of them, and the generations who will follow, we keep the torch burning, and prepare to pass it along. For more information, visit www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/internalmedicine.
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*Rates effective 1 July 2010, subject to change.
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UC Davis Health System
4150 V Street, PSSB Suite 3100
Sacramento, CA 95817-1460
(916) 703-5117
www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/internalmedicine

Timothy E. Albertson, M.D., MPH.,
Interim Chair
David M. Eastis, Development Officer
and Editor
e-mail: david.eastis.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu

DIVISIONS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT
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