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Boston University
School of Medicine to observe University’s 150th Anniversary with major heart disease symposium

The School of Medicine this spring will commemorate the 150th Anniversary of Boston University by sponsoring a symposium entitled "Prevention and Treatment of Cardiovascular Diseases in the 1990s," to be held April 24 and 25 in the University Hospital’s Keefer Auditorium. The two-day program will feature Dean Aram Chobanian, BUSM faculty members and other leaders in the field of cardiovascular disease, including Nobel laureate Joseph L. Goldstein, M.D., a professor of molecular genetics and medicine at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

The symposium, which is the fourth in a series of national health-policy conferences sponsored by the BUSM-based National Research and Demonstration Center for Hypertension, will provide a forum for the discussion of cardiovascular-disease health policy for the next decade. The conference will be followed by the dedication of the Whitaker Cardiovascular Institute, which has been the site of much of the Medical Center’s pioneering research on cardiovascular disease. For further information on the BUSM symposium, contact Kirsten Levy at x4018 (638-4018).

One of many special events

The symposium is one of many special programs and events that will mark the University’s Sesquicentennial observance, which began on Founders Day, March 13, and will continue through October. Sesquicentennial activities in the upcoming months will include "AIDS—Strategy Planning to Effect Change in Curricula, Practice and Research for Health Care and Human Services," an April 26 symposium sponsored by the Goldman School of Graduate Dentistry, the School of Social Work and Sargent College of Allied Health Professions, and the Charlesbank Festival, a Sept. 9 event that will feature the University’s performing artists of past and present.

BUSD alumnus Louis Sullivan ’58 sworn in as Secretary of Health and Human Services

School of Medicine alumnus and former faculty member Louis W. Sullivan ’58, president of Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, was sworn in on March 10 as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in a ceremony in Washington, D.C. President George Bush was among those who took part in the ceremony.

Sullivan became founding dean and director of the medical program at Morehouse College in 1975 and was made president of the Morehouse School of Medicine in 1983. In 1985 Boston University President John Silber presented Sullivan with the prestigious Boston University Alumni Award for Distinguished Public Service. In addition, Sullivan received a Centennial Citation honoring him during BUSM’s 100th anniversary celebration in 1973 as one of the outstanding graduates of BUSM during the last half century.

Sullivan returned to BUSM in the mid-60s as an assistant professor of medicine and was later named a professor of medicine and physiology. He was instrumental in planning and implementing the first minority recruitment program at BUSM. Sullivan, a prominent hematologist, was the first project director of the Sickle Cell Anemia Center at Boston City Hospital and co-director of hematology at the Medical Center.

Carl Franzblau, Ph.D., appointed associate dean for Graduate Studies

Carl Franzblau, Ph.D., a professor of biochemistry and chairman of the Department of Biochemistry at BUSM, recently was named associate dean for Graduate Biomedical Science Studies at BUSM and chairman of the Division of Medical and Dental Sciences of the Graduate School of Boston University.

Franzblau replaces Ruth Levine, Ph.D., who stepped down as BUSM associate dean and as chairman of the Division—a responsibility she has held since 1961. She remains both a professor of pharmacology at BUSM and a University Professor
at the University. She continues to head the Master of Arts in Medical Sciences program, which she created through the Division of Medical and Dental Sciences.

In his new role, Franzblau will coordinate and develop graduate programs administered within BUSM. These programs are designed for students pursuing a career in medical research and lead to both the Ph.D. and M.D.-Ph.D. degrees.

Franzblau’s leadership and expertise, particularly in the area of connective-tissue research, have been instrumental in the growth of the Department of Biochemistry, which is the largest basic-science department at BUSM. He has served on the BUSM faculty since 1962.

**Robert F. Meenan, M.D., appointed chief of Arthritis Section**

Robert F. Meenan, M.D., an associate professor of medicine, recently was named head of the Arthritis Section in the School’s Division of Medicine and chief of rheumatology at the University Hospital. Meenan is responsible for the Section’s academic programs and for the clinical rheumatology programs at UH and Boston City Hospital, where he also is chief of rheumatology.

Meenan, a BUSM graduate who has gained national recognition for his work in arthritis and rheumatology, has been a member of the Division and the Section since 1977. He serves as second vice president of the American College of Rheumatology and will become the 54th president of that organization in 1990.

**BUSM study finds possible link between oral contraceptives and breast cancer**

A recent study conducted by the School of Public Health’s Slone Epidemiology Unit suggests that women under the age of 45 who use oral contraceptives may be at increased risk of breast cancer. The results were made public at a recent Food and Drug Administration hearing on breast cancer and oral contraceptives.

The study was conducted to assess the relationship between the use of oral contraceptives and the risk of breast cancer in women under the age of 45. Researchers compared 407 women with breast cancer and 424 control patients in hospitals in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. Women who had used oral contraceptives were estimated to have twice the risk of breast cancer as those who never used them; those women who had used oral contraceptives for 10 or more years had four times the risk.

These results differ from the findings of earlier studies conducted by the same researchers, which showed no link between oral contraceptives and breast cancer. Other recent studies also have produced conflicting data, with some showing a link while other studies find no association.

The senior investigators of the study include Slone Unit Director Samuel Shapiro, M.D., a research professor of socio-medical sciences and community medicine, and public health (epidemiology and biostatistics) and Lynn Rosenberg, Sc.D., an associate professor of public health (epidemiology) and assistant director of the Unit. Donald Miller, Sc.D., is the first author of the manuscript, which was completed while he served as an epidemiologist with the Slone Unit. Shapiro and Rosenberg are initiating further studies on the subject.

**Prenatal testing during first trimester proves effective**

Researchers at BUSM, Massachusetts General Hospital and the University of Milan, Italy, have demonstrated that serum alphafetoprotein (AFP) screening during the first trimester of pregnancy is nearly as effective in the detection of serious fetal chromosome defects as AFP testing during the second trimester. The researchers, led by Aubrey Milunsky, M.D., a professor of pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, and director of the Center for Human Genetics at BUSM, reported the results of AFP screening of 540 women nine to 11 weeks into their pregnancies. The study was reported in the December issue of the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Maternal AFP screening during the second trimester of pregnancy is an established tool for detecting pregnancies that are at risk for congenital abnormalities, including neural tube defects and Down syndrome, or serious obstetric complications. Once high or low levels of AFP are indicated, an amniocentesis can be done to diagnose genetic disorders.

Using a new sensitive radioimmunoassay, the investigators were able to detect approximately 30 percent of all chromosome defects during the first trimester of pregnancy, compared to 33 percent of all such defects detected during the second trimester.

**SPH researchers study elevated cancer rates on upper Cape Cod**

Researchers at the School of Public Health are beginning a two-year, $500,000 study into the causes of elevated cancer rates in permanent residents of upper Cape Cod. The researchers will study 1,200 cancer cases reported in the area between 1982 and 1985, along with 1,500 controls from the same geographic area. Seven types of cancer will be studied: breast, colon-rectal, lung, bladder, kidney and pancreatic, as well as leukemia.

The investigators will look at a number of possible factors, including exposure to the air and water pollution; radio waves; electromagnetic radiation; and such lifestyle factors as smoking and alcohol use. Although data will not be released until the end of the study, public meetings will be held to inform concerned residents of the study’s progress. The principal investigator of the study, which is funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, is Ann Aschengrau, Sc.D., an assistant professor of public health at BUSM.
Medical Center honors Black Achievers, ‘350 years of Black Presence in Boston’

The Schools of Medicine and Graduate Dentistry, the University Hospital and the Evans Medical Foundation recently honored the Medical Center’s 1989 Black Achievers and commemorated the birth of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with a program entitled "350 Years of Black Presence in Boston."

Ruth M. Batson, M.Ed., a retired BUSM associate professor of psychiatry, was the keynote speaker at the program, which was held in the Hospital’s Keefer Auditorium. Remarks were made by Dean Aram Chobanian, M.D., Dean Spencer N. Frankl, D.D.S., of the Goldman School, and UH President J. Scott Abercrombie Jr., M.D. Robin Corbett ’89 served as mistress of ceremonies and Carol James, executive director of the Greater Boston YMCA’s Black Achievers’ Program, introduced BUMC’s 1989 Achievers. The Medical Campus’s 1989 Black Achievers include: Alice Owen, assistant administrator for the Division of Surgery and coordinator of the Residency Training Program; Phyllis Stevens, director of minority affairs; and Charles Terrell, associate dean of student affairs and director of the Office of Student Financial Management.

Earl R. Loew, M.D., former chairman of Physiology, dies at 81

Earl R. Loew, M.D., former chairman of the Department of Physiology at BUSM, died Nov. 25 at age 81 following an extended illness. Loew served as professor and chairman of the Department from 1948 until 1969. He became a professor emeritus in 1972.

A memorial service for Loew was held in December at the United Methodist Church of Newton. Memorial contributions in his name may be made to the BUSM Alumni Medical Library through the School’s Development Office, 80 East Concord Street, Boston, MA, 02118.

Boston Can Share Food Drive called ‘an overwhelming success’

The fourth annual Boston Can Share Canned Food Drive, which was held last November to collect canned food for the city’s 200 emergency food pantries, was "an overwhelming success," according to Lorraine Peters, assistant to the director of the Medical Center. The 160 Boston-area companies and agencies that participated in the Drive collected more than 105,000 cans of food, a 42-percent increase over the 1987 total, according to Boston’s Mayor Ray Flynn.

Peters expressed appreciation "to those individuals at the Medical Center who so generously donated canned goods. A special thanks goes out to Jim Munroe, manager of Custodial Services, and his crew, who were so helpful in organizing the boxes of food to be delivered to the Boston Food Bank.” Peters, who noted that hunger is a year-round problem, suggested that members of the BUMC community call the Food Bank for more information regarding volunteer work or donations (427-5831).

Huntington’s Disease Hoopathon to be held in April

Volunteers and basketball shooters are invited to participate in the Tenth Annual Basketball Hoopathon for Huntington’s Disease, to be held Thursday, April 27, in the Solomon Carter Fuller Mental Health Center gymnasium. Proceeds from the 24-hour free-throw event will be used to purchase wheelchairs for Huntington’s disease patients. The Hoopathon will begin at 6 a.m.; a Media Shoot-Out, featuring Boston-area media personalities, will be held at noon. Any BUSM students interested in shooting on a team opposite the Goldman School of Graduate Dentistry team are asked to contact Kevin Zimay, Box 444. For further information, call May Long at the Massachusetts Chapter of the Society at x8333 (638-8333).

Statistics in Globe article on BUSM women faculty members inaccurate

A Dec. 15 article in The Boston Globe on women in academic medicine included an inaccurate percentage of full-time female faculty members at the School of Medicine. The article, a summary of a study published in the Dec. 15 edition of the New England Journal of Medicine, inaccurately stated that the percentage of women on the faculty who were full professors was 0.07 in 1988; the correct figure should have been 7.3 percent. The Globe ran a correction the next day.
John Murphy, Ph.D., receives $2.3 million to study new class of leukemia drugs

John R. Murphy, Ph.D., a research professor of medicine, biochemistry and microbiology, and chief of biomolecular medicine at the University Hospital, is the principal investigator of a five-year, $2.3 million cooperative agreement from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to continue to study a new class of drugs that attacks specific leukemias and lymphomas.

Murphy's research involves the genetic linking of IL-2, a protein growth factor needed by some leukemia cells, with a portion of the deadly diphtheria toxin molecule. The new molecule, called IL-2-toxin, then is absorbed by the leukemia and lymphoma cells as if it were pure IL-2. Once inside the cell, the diphtheria toxin component is able to attack and kill that cell.

Also involved in the study is Ronald McCaffrey, M.D., a professor of medicine and chief of medical oncology at the University Hospital. McCaffrey will be involved in identifying the types of leukemias and lymphomas that have the receptor needed to bind the new toxin, and the conditions under which these leukemias and lymphomas can be killed by the toxin. Researchers at Beth Israel Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston also are involved in the study.

Briefly Noted

Robert G. Feldman, M.D., professor and chairman of the Department of Neurology, recently was invited to serve on the Medical Advisory Board of the American Parkinson's Disease Association. Maureen T. Kavanah, M.D., an assistant professor of surgery, has been appointed to the executive committee of the National Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Colorectal Program.