

The Official USU Newsletter

# the pulse

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Photo by Thomas C. Balfour

**On the cover**

The Healers motorcycle club is one of the many interest groups for students, staff and faculty on campus. (See story, page 3.)



# Pathology professor earns Wu Award

By Christine Creenan-Jones



Photo by Thomas C. Balfour

Clifford Snapper, M.D., professor of Pathology, and his research associate, Quanyi Chen, M.D., examine tissue cultures for research they're conducting at USU about the body's immune response to polysaccharides. Dr. Snapper is this year's Henry Wu Award for Excellence in Basic Science Research recipient.

Clifford Snapper, M.D., professor of Pathology at USU, is the 2012 winner of the Henry Wu Award for Excellence in Basic Research. Snapper was nominated for the award by his peers, on the basis of a recent breakthrough in his decade-long investigation into the body's immune response to complex sugars called polysaccharides.

Polysaccharides expressed by various bacteria enable pathogens to evade the host immune response, and therefore cause disease. In this regard, researchers have developed several successful anti-bacterial vaccines by eliciting specific and protective anti-polysaccharide antibody responses. Most basic studies on how antibody responses to polysaccharides are regulated in vivo have used isolated polysaccharide antigens. However, few investigators besides Snapper's team, are studying how bacteria influence the nature of the antibody response to the polysaccharides they naturally express.

Snapper's findings were published – a requirement for Wu Award selection – in an article called, “The Nature of an In Vivo Anti-Capsular Polysaccharide Response Is Markedly Influenced by the Composition and/or Architecture of the Bacterial Subcapsular

Domain,” which appeared in a recent issue of the Journal of Immunology.

Although winning the Wu Award is encouraging, Snapper is most eager to continue making important contributions to science and conducting research that leads to better immunotherapies.

“The major source of satisfaction in being a scientist derives from the emersion in a project from its inception to a hopefully successful conclusion. This is followed by the excitement of knowing that your published work is available for reading by a global audience. Nevertheless, the typical day to day experience in the research lab is often one of frustration with failed experiments, administrative hurdles, and a scarcity of positive feedback about one's imagined or real accomplishments from colleagues. Winning awards is really ‘icing on the cake,’” he said. “They definitely make the cake taste better, on those rare occasions when the opportunity to eat cake does actually arise.”

The Henry Wu Award – named for the former chair of USU's Department of Microbiology who strongly supported doctoral programs in the basic sciences – is sponsored by USU's Faculty Senate. The Wu recipient also presents a lecture during Research Days, May 14-15.

# Healers on the road

By Christine Creenan-Jones



Photo by Thomas C. Barlow

Medical school is challenging, but every day before class begins and after it ends, Air Force 2nd Lt. Matt Hamm gets a brief reprieve from his enormous workload. Instead of driving a car to USU like most personnel, he rides his motorcycle, a red Honda CRF450, to campus – rain or shine.

Biking is Hamm's long-time passion – a temporary break from everyday stress – and his fervor is catching at USU. Three years ago, he started The Healers motorcycle club, a university-approved interest group for riding enthusiasts.

"Our club is very diverse," he said. "Faculty, staff and students, beginners and seasoned bikers – all with unique experiences and backgrounds – gather to share important information and ride motorcycles together. It's a fun way to build camaraderie and contribute something unique to this extraordinary campus."

Besides planning rides – usually somewhere local, but a new course each time – Hamm, the club's president, and other Healers spend a great deal of time researching local and national motorcycle laws to raise

awareness and promote bike safety among USU club members.

"We're strong advocates for responsible riding," he said. "Many motorcyclists get into accidents because of inexperience or careless riding and from distracted drivers, so it's imperative all club members know the rules of the road and ways to stay safe on their bikes."

The club's name, The Healers, chosen specifically because it represents the mission at USU, even captures the positive goals of the club.

"Motorcyclists don't always have the best reputations," said Hamm. "But, our group was created as an uplifting network of support for bike

lovers and as a forum for learning more about motorcycles – required safety courses, licensing and registration, engine maintenance, and anything else helpful to fellow riders at USU."

Motorcycles like Hamm's can be a lot of work, expensive and inconvenient at times. He's gone through six bikes in eleven years. Still, the payoff is worth the sacrifice, said the weather-hardened, rain-or-shine rider.

"I feel connected with the world around me when I'm riding. I can see, smell and hear everything. It's a feeling of unbelievable freedom."

Email [matt\\_hamm@yahoo.com](mailto:matt_hamm@yahoo.com) for more information about The Healers.

**40<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY 1972 - 2012**

## USU Research Days 2012

May 14-15

### Save The Date

Visit [www.hjf.org](http://www.hjf.org) to submit abstracts by March 23 and register for events.

# USU Family Docs named Physicians of the Year

By Sharon Willis

The Uniformed Services Academy of Family Physicians (USAFP) has announced its annual Physicians of the Year and two doctors with USU ties are among the recipients.

Maj. (Dr.) Aaron Saguil, assistant professor in USU's Department of Family Medicine, and Lt.Col. (Dr.) Shawn Kane (SoM '95), were honored for their achievements during the USAFP annual meeting in Las Vegas, March 22.

Saguil was chosen as the USAFP Uniformed Family Physician of the Year. This peer-decided honor is awarded to the uniformed family physician who exemplifies the tradition of the family doctor and his contributions in ensuring continued health and quality of care to the members of the Uniformed Services.

"Dr. Saguil serves as the USU academic liaison to Fort Belvoir Community Hospital for the Department of Family Medicine," said Capt. (Dr.) Mark Stephens, chair of USU's

Department of Family Medicine. "He was the FBCH Teacher of the Year for academic year 2010-2011. Dr. Saguil brings extensive experience in graduate medical education to the department. The joy he brings to the teaching environment is inspirational and refreshing."

Kane, who will be joining USU's Family Medicine department faculty this summer, was honored as the USAFP Operational Family Physician of the Year. The award was presented to Kane for exhibiting outstanding achievement in the provision, promotion or research in operational medical care.

"Dr. Kane has a longstanding track record of clinical excellence in the operational environment. His experience and academic credentials will further strengthen ongoing interdepartmental collaborations to ensure USU students are always ready to care for those in harm's way," Stephens said.

## USU 40th Anniversary Trivia Contest



Buildings A, B, D and E each have areas named after important figures in USU's history. The first person to correctly identify at least four of these spaces and send their responses to Christine. Creenan-Jones@usuhs.edu wins a large coffee and donut, courtesy of USU's cafeteria.

## PCNS in the Big Easy



Several Perioperative Clinical Nurse Specialist (PCNS) alumni and faculty from USU pose for a photo following an event in New Orleans sponsored by the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine. The event was held in conjunction with the Association of Perioperative Registered Nurses (AORN) Congress, which included presentations by retired Army Colonel Linda Wanzer (front row, far right), director of USU's PCNS program, and Army Major Thomas Rawlings (back row, third from right), assistant director of the PCNS program -- both of whom received standing ovations for their presentations.

## McKay Receives Larrey Award



Norman Rich, M.D., former chair of USU's Norman M. Rich Department of Surgery, presented the Baron Dominique Jean Larrey Award for Excellence in Military Surgery to Navy Commander (Dr.) Patricia McKay, interim chair of the Department, during USU's 32nd Annual Surgical Associates Day.

# Nurses: Advocating, Leading and Caring

By CPT Nikki R. Bailey, AN, USA



Courtesy Photo

USU's Nursing Week Committee members (front, l to r): CPT Crystal Hansen; MAJ Jody Brown; Maj Melissa Smith; (back, l to r): Capt Carol Kelly; CPT Nikki Bailey; LT Karen Ortolani; and CPT Sean Harris.

National Nurses Week – an annual celebration beginning May 6 and culminating on May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale – is coming to USU. The Graduate School of Nursing (GSN) is sponsoring the celebration, honoring military nurses who, like Nightingale, provide care to service members and transform health care through visionary leadership every day.

This year's main event, being held in USU's cafeteria on May 8 at noon, includes guest speakers Ada Sue Hinshaw, Ph.D., dean of the GSN and Dale C. Smith, Ph.D., senior vice president of USU. Cake, prizes and other activities capturing the spirit of the military nurse corps – an important part of USU and the Military Health System at large – will follow formal presentations.

Today, the profession of nursing is truly a science and art that embraces people dedicated to the profession of caring for others. The 2012 National Nurses Week theme is "Nurses: Advocating, Leading and Caring." Nurses perform these roles in a variety of settings, from emergency rooms

and inpatient units to school-based clinics and ambulatory care settings. As leaders, they may be found in diverse positions such as staff nurse, clinical nurse specialist, nurse practitioner and nurse researcher. Nurses perform in non-traditional roles such as Chief Executive Officer of health care facilities, legal nurse consultant, and nursing informatics specialist. In the military, nurses are now serving as top leaders within the Department of Defense and Military Health System to include Army Surgeon General, commanders of military treatment facilities, and chief nurses in each service's Department of Nursing.

As advocates, nurses strive to improve quality of care and play a major role in cost effective patient-centered treatment. Nurses are caring professionals who work in collaboration with physicians, social workers and ancillary staff to provide the best patient care. Nurses hold the honor as being ranked as the most trusted profession by the public they serve. National Nurses Week is a time to recognize, support and show gratitude for the nursing profession.



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## 'Top Gun' Actor Visits Troops



Courtesy Photo

USU class of 1991 alumna, Army Col. (Dr.) Karen O'Brien, recently hosted a visit to Madigan Army Medical Center by actor Tom Skerritt, who is best known for his role in the 1980s film, *Top Gun*. Skerritt played Tom Cruise's *Top Gun* instructor, "Viper," in the movie, and was at the hospital to visit wounded warriors. O'Brien is the deputy commander for Clinical Services at Madigan.

# Deployed doc has Airmen on pins and needles

By Staff Sgt. J.G. Buzanowski, 380th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs



Photo by Staff Sgt. J.G. Buzanowski

How do you wake up Lady Gaga in the morning? Poke her face. How does Lt. Col. (Dr.) Darlene Smallman treat patients in pain? Same way.

Smallman, a USU class of 1995 alumna, is a flight surgeon deployed to the 380th Expeditionary Medical Group from the Pentagon. She's also one of about a hundred medical professionals in the Air Force trained to use acupuncture needles and techniques as part of her repertoire in helping people.

"No one knows exactly how acupuncture works, but what we do know is that proper technique and application is extremely effective at treating everything from pain to weight loss," said Smallman, a Neosho, Wis., native.

Certified practitioners of acupuncture like Smallman are trained to insert needles of various sizes at specific points on the body. This process affects specific nerve clusters or trigger points, and helps treat the body for various ailments.

Smallman studied at the Air Force Acupuncture Center on Joint Base Andrews, Md. Experts there developed techniques called "battle-field acupuncture" to help military suffering from rashes, pain, stress, migraines and even post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms.

"Acupuncture is just another tool in our toolbox we have to help people," Smallman said. "With battle-field acupuncture, we use traditional techniques targeted at issues military members have most often. The program is relatively easy to teach to other physicians in the field, and we've had a lot of success with it."

For Maj. Amber Hirsch, the 380th AEW judge advocate, acupuncture helped with chronic pain she has in her hip. While deployed to Iraq in 2007, the major aggravated a previous hip injury. After she returned home, she'd seen doctors at four different bases. Each one had a different diagnosis and prescribed various medications. None of them worked.

All that changed when Hirsch started seeing Smallman. The doctor applied 4 mm needles to specific points in Hirsch's ears, instantly dulling the pain in her hip.

"It's strange, I know, but it works," said Hirsch, deployed from Grissom Air Reserve Base, Ind. "I was completely skeptical at first, but I talked to one of the doctors here and they recommended it. Then I saw another girl who had it done for back pain and she said it worked. I'd been

dealing with the pain for so long; I figured I didn't have anything to lose."

Hirsch said the needles don't hurt much at all. It's like "when they prick your finger for a blood test," Hirsch said.

"But totally worth it, especially for as well as it works, at least for me," she said.

The acupuncture experience is a very personal treatment and doesn't necessarily work for everyone, Smallman cautioned.

"We want people to have realistic expectations about acupuncture; it's not the cure for cancer," she said. "It's one more way we have of helping people deal with pain in their lives.

"And if it does work in someone, it saves a lot of time and money we might otherwise spend sending them to a pain specialist, for example," she added. "It's an effective and inexpensive way for people to manage pain or other issues."

Since being deployed, Smallman has helped dozens of people through acupuncture.

"Patients get excited because it's something different they haven't tried, and then get even more excited when it works," Smallman said. "The best advice I can offer anyone is if someone is curious about whether acupuncture might work for them, they should ask their doctor."

# GSN Professor Earns Coveted Foreign Military Badge

By Sharon Willis



Courtesy Photo

Army Maj. Tyler Wilson, assistant professor in USU's Nurse Anesthesia program, is presented with a certificate of achievement by Brig. Gen. Hasso Koertge, the Commander of the German Armed Forces Command, United States/Canada, for completion of the rigorous German Armed Forces Troop Duty Proficiency Badge.

Army Maj. Tyler Wilson, assistant professor in USU's Graduate School of Nursing (GSN) Nurse Anesthesia program, was awarded the sought-after German Armed Forces Troop Duty Proficiency Badge, *Abzeichen für Leistungen im Truppendienst*, in Gold by Brig. Gen. Hasso Koertge, the Commander of the German Armed Forces Command, United States/Canada on March 21.

The coveted badge is awarded to military members who have demonstrated proficiency in general military performance, sports performance, and performance in their specialty and overall aptitude.

The badge is a decoration of the Bundeswehr, the armed forces of the

Federal Republic of Germany, and is authorized for all German troops. Soldiers from the U.S. and other Allied nations may also be awarded the badge, which is among the very few foreign awards approved for wear on the uniform, including the ACU.

Participants must first complete the Combat Lifesaver Level I course, or equivalent, to finish the first aid requirement. Soldiers then compete in seven events that test endurance, strength, marksmanship and cardio-fitness. Everyone takes part in the road march, which is done in ACUs without helmets and weapons, while carrying a 35-pound backpack, excluding water. Participants are given 10 minutes per kilometer (km). A 6 km, 1-hour finish nets a bronze grade, 9 km, 1.5-hour finish results in a silver grade, and a gold grade is based on a 12 km finish in 2 hours.

Soldiers also must all demonstrate their marksmanship by firing a Beretta or P8 pistol from 20 meters, hitting a minimum of 3 of the 5 targets. In addition, they are required to take part in a 200-meter swim. At age 38, Wilson, who was the oldest competitor, was required to finish the 200-meter swim in 7 minutes or less.

Participants may choose the remaining four events from a variety of sporting activities, including a 1,000-meter swim or 3,000-meter long distance run, broad jump or high jump, 100- or 1000-meter sprint, shot put or stone throw, with times or distances based on age category. Based on his age, Wilson had to jump at least 14.10 ft. in the broad jump or 4.26 ft. in the high jump, run a 100-meter sprint in 14.0 seconds or less or a 1,000-meter sprint in 4.10 minutes or less, throw a shotput 25.43 ft. or more, or throw a stone 27.89 feet, and run 3,000 meters in 14.5 minutes or swim 1,000 meters in 28.3 minutes.

"I would like to take a moment to recognize MAJ John Tyler Wilson

for an exemplary accomplishment, Army Col. Paul Lewis, Ph.D., FNP-C, assistant professor in the Graduate School of Nursing and the GSN's senior Army officer. "This represents a significant achievement as this is a very strenuous and difficult badge to obtain. Being awarded this badge is a great accomplishment by Maj. Wilson and continues to showcase the stellar faculty at USU."

Wilson is among a number of noteworthy officers who have earned the award, including Maj. Gen. (ret.) Gale Pollock, former Chief of the Army Nurse Corps and Deputy Surgeon General; retired four-star General Crosbie Saint, the former Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Army Europe; and Army General David Petraeus, who recently retired and was appointed as director of the Central Intelligence Agency.





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