The Grapevine

Congratulations...

• Stephanie Higgins, RN, a staff nurse in the SICU, recently received the Nurse of the Year Award from the Center for Donation and Transplant (CDT). Each year, CDT honors a nursing professional employed by a hospital served by CDT who has shown exemplary dedication and commitment to organ donation.

Did You Know?

• Albany Med is asking employees to remember to please refrain from using any external information to the Albany Medical Center Foundation or the Albany Medical College Alumni Association. The information is not considered a Category A (the highest bioterrorism) event. Metzger cautions that more research needs to be done on the antibody treatment to assess if it will work the same way in humans as it does in animals and whether it would be safe in humans, but he says this is an important first step.

Also contributing to the groundbreaking was surgical director of the Capital Region Children's Hospital, Rosemary McCullough, RN, PhD, assistant professor-Chandra Glaze, RN, PhD, and graduate student Jacqueline Golden.

Albany Med Scientists Report Breakthrough in Tularemia Research

A research team led by Dennis Metzger, PhD, has shown that experiments specific to anti-tularemia antibodies, the most potent form of the disease. Their findings suggest the approach may be a possible alternative treatment approach to traditional antibiotics that might prove useful early in the course of an outbreak of the disease.

“Tularemia-specific antibodies may enhance an individual’s immune response to the bacteria after exposure, essentially acting as a surrogate vaccine,” says Metzger. Further, he says the antibodies are rapid and specific. Also, he says if further research demonstrates that the technique is effective and safe, it may potentially be used in people with weak or nonexistent immune systems to minimize the chances of the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

The results were reported in the July issue of The Journal of Immunology. The work was supported by a $3.3 million grant Albany Medical College received from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) to establish a biodefense research center. The grant will provide funding for the research, and is considered one of the largest research grants in the history of the College.

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The grapevine is compiled by Glenda Goodwin, SCN, a staff nurse in the SICU. If you have an event to share with the Grapevine, please call 43 New Scotland Avenue (Mail Code 125), Albany, New York 12208, or e-mail info@albanymedical.org in the Grapevine.

Light up the Night Tickets Available

• Tickets are still available for the “Light up the Night” benefit at 43 New Scotland Avenue (Mail Code 125), Albany, New York 12208. Call 262-4444 for all work-related requests. Alternatively, employees may contact the Albany Medical Center Foundation at (518) 262-3835 or e-mail info@albanymedical.org.

Upcoming Events

• The Alumni Association is sponsoring “An Evening with the Philadelphia Orchestra—Itzhak Perlman Returns!” on Wednesday, August 9. A dinner buffet will be held at 6pm at the Hall of Springs followed by the concert at 8pm. The event is open to all alumni and residents-tickets are limited. Call 262-5033 for information.
Dr. Gibbons to Head New Division of Pediatric Neurology

Vesna Gibbons, MD, a pediatric neurologist, has joined the department of neurology. As the head of the new division of pediatric neurology, Gibbons will provide specialized care for the clinical, educational, and research missions of the division.

"His extensive training and experience in treating a wide range of pediatric neurologic disorders will provide more specialized care for the children in our region and their families," said Wolfe. Gibbons is a fellow in pediatric neurology at George Washington University Medical Center as well as fellowships in epilepsy and clinical and neurophysiological neurosurgery at Children's Hospital in Boston. Gibbons is board certified by the American Board of Pediatrics and the American Board of Neurology, American Clinical Neurophysiology Society, American Academy of Clinical Neurophysiology and the American Epilepsy Society.

Albany Med Seeks Volunteers for Alzheimer’s Study

Dr. Dhruv Grover, one of the world’s leading experts in Alzheimer’s, saysFallen Leaf, MD, clinical director of the Alzheimer’s Center at Albany Med. "If this is so, then a drug to lower copper levels might be useful in treating the disease. Our study hopes to confirm the link between copper and Alzheimer’s."

"Research suggests that increased copper levels may make the disease worse for people with Alzheimer’s," says Fallen Leaf, MD, clinical director of the Alzheimer’s Center at Albany Med. "If this is so, then a drug to lower copper levels might be useful in treating the disease. Our study hopes to confirm the link between copper and Alzheimer’s."

Volunteers will be required to make two visits to the Alzheimer’s Center. During the first visit, volunteers will be assessed for eligi- bility and, once they have agreed to the study, will undergo brief physical, neurological and cognitive exams. Blood and urine samples for routine health screening will be taken during the initial exam. The second visit will be scheduled within a month of the first, and blood and urine samples as well as a buccal swab (swabbing of the inside of the cheek) will be collected. The buccal swab, blood and urine samples will be sent to the University of Michigan Medical School for DNA testing, and for trace mineral and protein analyses.

To be eligible, participants must have a clinical diagnosis of mild to moderate Alzheimer’s disease or Parkinson’s disease, or be a healthy individual with no family history of either disease. Volunteers must be 50 years or older. Those participating in the Alzheimer’s group must also have a study partner to assess behav- ior and monitor daily activities.

For more information about the study, contact the Alzheimer’s Center at 518-262-6800 or e-mail fallenleaf@marl.edu.

Fall Registration for Kidskeller Underway

Registration for summer and fall openings in Kidskeller’s toddler and pre-kindergarten programs is currently being accepted. Kidskeller, Inc., the children’s program at Albany Med, pro- vides full- and part-time child care for children ages 6 weeks through 5 years of age. The programs of Kidskeller provide a nurturing and stimulating environment that focuses on the developmental and physical needs of young children.

Kidskeller, Kids. Too provide breakfast, lunch and after- noon snack for all children enrolled in the programs. Weekly music and movement with Andy Morse, computer lab, monthly field trips and outdoor playgrounds are just a few of the opportunities offered to children of the Kidskeller programs.

"We’re interested in having teachers and parents who would like to enroll their child in our programs at a full- or part-tim- e status, please contact the office at 262-8058. Come visit us and see what Kidskeller Inc. has to offer you and your child.

There are additional benefits as well. "The experience has already taught me so much about what happens here at Albany Med," said Wolfe. "I have met so many wonderful people and I knew I could help out more on the job."

Typically after a spurt is reported, at least five members of the HAZMAT team respond to the scene to identify the material. For lower risk spills, basic protective gear is seen to clean up the spill. On rare occasions when the chemical in question is a high risk, team members don full protective suits. In addition to cleaning up the spill, team members are also responsible for providing necessary medical attention, communicating with internal hospital staff, patients, and visitors, and, when needed, safely evacuating people from the area.

Air Force veteran and respiratory therapist Don Savage, who works the evening shift, joined the team last October. "The HAZMAT team has given me a lot of great practice through the trainings and drills that we are required to do," said Savage. "Ultimately, the trainings underscore the need to be aware of our environment and the materials we are dealing with to ensure a safe and successful clean up."

Savage says emergency training, and experience with his military background. While no experience is required of volunteers, fire department, EMS or military training is helpful. New volunteers are trained on the numerous types of chemicals that can be found at Albany Med and the appropriate methods for cleaning spills. During the course of one year, volunteers complete the initial training, participate in drills required by OSHA, and a certifica- tion course. Compensation for training hours is paid at the volunteer’s regular salary.

"Albany Med is a unique institution when you consider that we are a level one trauma center, a medical college and a research facility. Volunteers are critical in our ability to respond to the range of calls we receive," said Wolfe. In accordance with standards set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) of the Department of Labor, the Department of Health Affairs, and the Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (CAHO), Albany Med is required to have staff readily available and specially trained to properly handle hazardous material incidents.

According to Street, Albany Med needs at least 40 individuals to comfortably cover three shifts in a 24-hour period. "While we can manage hazardous spills with the team we have, additional volunteers are needed as we strive to continually improve our response time and to reduce any potential impact of an incident on patients and staff. We encourage anyone who is interested to join the team, especially if you work the overnight shift."

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