Fisher Named Distinguished Alumnus

Jack C. Fisher, MD '62, surgeon and historian, has been named the recipient of a Distinguished Alumnus Award by the University at Buffalo Alumni Association. He was presented the award at the Alumni Association's annual awards dinner and reception held on April 28 at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Buffalo.

Fisher is emeritus professor of surgery at the University of California at San Diego. Throughout his career, he has authored or coauthored over 200 papers that have enhanced the study and practice of surgery. He is a former director of medicine at Suburban Hospital, which he has devoted a great deal of time and resources to. Fisher has also been a member of the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences' Dean's Advisory Council for more than a decade.

Medical Officers Appointed at Suburban

In 2001, he published a book, Stolen Glory: The McKinley Assassination, in which he chronicled the 1901 shooting of the president at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. Fisher has performed surgery on children living in underdeveloped parts of the world to relieve suffering from cleft lip and other debilitating deformities, and is a past recipient of UC San Diego's Humanitarian Award for "activity related to improving health of people anywhere in the world."

He has served as a UB alumni ambassador in San Diego and has devoted a great deal of time and resources to the university. He has also been a member of the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences' Dean's Advisory Council for more than a decade.

Narby

Narby is a house physician at Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital and also has a private practice in internal medicine. Narby received his bachelor's degree in biology and his medical degree from George Town University.

Archives Acquire Notes' Papers

The University at Buffalo Library Archives has acquired the papers of Eva M. Nolles, RN, a historic figure in nursing. She became the first black nurse to be trained in Buffalo. Nolles went on to become a distinguished educator, a nationally recognized figure in health care, a promoter of civil rights and education for minority women and the founder of the New York State Nurse Week.

White House Conference on Aging

In December 2005, Carl Granger, MD, professor and chair emeritus of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, attended the White House Conference on Aging as a delegate-at-large. The 2005 conference took place in Washington, DC, December 4–11 and was attended by 1,200 delegates. The event was notable in that it occurred as the first wave of the baby-boom generation prepares for retirement. At-large delegates represent national aging and other allied organizations, baby boomers, academic institutions, business and industry, disability, nonprofit and veterans' organizations and others with a stake in aging in America. Granger, an internationally recognized author and also has a private practice in internal medicine.

Granger

Granger, an internationally recognized author and is a house physician at Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital and also has a private practice in internal medicine.

Nolles

Nolles, a distinguished educator, a nationally recognized figure in health care, a promoter of civil rights and education for minority women and the founder of the New York State Nurse Week, has been named the recipient of a Distinguished Alumnus Award by the University at Buffalo Alumni Association. She has also been a member of the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences' Dean's Advisory Council for more than a decade.

Antalek

Antalek is a former clinical instructor and is a house physician at Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital and also has a private practice in internal medicine.

Barbara Byers

Barbara Byers, a former clinical instructor, has authored or coauthored over 200 papers that have enhanced the study and practice of surgery. She has also been a member of the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences' Dean's Advisory Council for more than a decade.

Noles

Noles graduated from the University at Buffalo School of Nursing in 1940. She received a bachelor's degree in nursing and master's degree in education from UB. She is the author of Black History: A Different Approach—A Compilation.

Buffalo's Blacks Talking Proud

She is the author of the New York State Nurses Association yearbook and also has a private practice in internal medicine. She is a house physician at Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital and also has a private practice in internal medicine.

Grieger

In December 2005, Carl Granger, MD, professor and chair emeritus of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, attended the White House Conference on Aging as a delegate-at-large. The 2005 conference took place in Washington, DC, December 4–11 and was attended by 1,200 delegates. The event was notable in that it occurred as the first wave of the baby-boom generation prepares for retirement. At-large delegates represent national aging and other allied organizations, baby boomers, academic institutions, business and industry, disability, nonprofit and veterans' organizations and others with a stake in aging in America. Granger, an internationally recognized author and is a house physician at Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital and also has a private practice in internal medicine.

S. A. Ungar

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Pharmacy School, Pfizer Create Strategic Alliance

Fostering education and research

In February 9, the UB School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences announced a strategic alliance with Pfizer, Inc., that will provide up to $7.5 million to develop at UB a Center of Excellence in Pharmacokinetics and Pharmacodynamics and to support training and research in pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics.

Pfizer will provide the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences with $2.5 million per year for three years, with possible renewal for an additional two years. The funding will be used to hire new faculty members, increase doctoral student enrollment, expand the school’s postdoctoral fellowship program and support performance of cutting-edge research in pharmacokinetics, the study of how drugs are distributed and eliminated by the body, and pharmacodynamics, which examines the nature of physiological responses to drugs. “Forging this strategic partnership with Pfizer represents a unique and timely opportunity for UB to further our research and training in the fields of pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics,” said UB President John B. Simpson, at the time the alliance was announced. “We’re deeply grateful for Pfizer’s support, both for its recognition of the significance and scope of UB’s leadership in the pharmaceutical sciences, and for its commitment to working in partnership with our university to enhance the scientists whose research and discoveries will expand the boundaries of these fields.”

Wayne K. Anderson, PhD, dean of the UB School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, said, “Pfizer’s choice of the university as its partner in this initiative underscores the company’s belief in the pharmaceutical sciences at UB and in the university as a top-tier research institution.”

“UB’s strong partnership with Pfizer is built on the success of many pharmaceutical science graduates within their organization,” Anderson said. “We are one of the nation’s top pharmacy schools, and Pfizer considered the quality of science that we produce to be a driving factor in creating this strategic alliance. This partnership will enable us to play an even larger role as a leading source of research and training in pharmaceutical sciences.”

Anderson added that “designation as a center of excellence not only will confirm the school’s recognized premier status in pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics, but will also add international attention to its extensive training and research programs in critical areas of assessing and developing safe and effective drugs. He credited the efforts of William J. Jusko, PhD, professor and chair of the school’s Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Lisa J. Benincosa, PhD, ’93, executive director of clinical pharmacy and research, teaching and service,” says Ronald P. Rubin, PhD, professor and chair of the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology. “The university as its partner in this initiative underscores the company’s belief in the pharmaceutical sciences at UB and in the university as a top-tier research institution.”

“We’re one of the nation’s top pharmacy schools, and Pfizer considered the quality of science that we produce to be a driving factor in creating this strategic alliance.”

Jusko, a pioneer in the fields of pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics who is editor-in-chief of the Journal of Pharmacokinetics and Pharmacodynamics, said the alliance will allow the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences and the pharmacy school to continue producing top-notch graduates who are actively recruited by industry and academia. UB has more than 50 alumni who have risen to key positions at Pfizer, ranging from research division leaders to vice president. “We’re considered a relatively small department and the new alliance will allow us to expand in numbers of faculty members and trainers,” Jusko explained. ”Pfizer’s magnificent gesture will increase our numbers of graduates, in addition to promoting the need for more training in the critical fields of pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics."

By Mary Cochrane

In Memoriam

Dennis Higgins, PhD
Professor of pharmacology and toxicology

Dennis M. Higgins, PhD, professor of pharmacology and toxicology in the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, died on January 6, 2006. He was 58.

“Dennis was a model faculty member who performed with excellence in research, teaching and service,” says Ronald P. Rubin, PhD, professor and chair of the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology. “He particularly enjoyed his one-on-one interactions with the many graduate students he mentored. Their devotion to him endured long after his departure from his laboratory. Dennis possessed a keen mind and a gentle sense of humor, which made him a perfect mentor of young minds.” Rubin notes that Higgins’ professional approach to all aspects of his responsibilities as a faculty member contributed enormously to the intellectual climate of the department and to the medical school.

His seminal research on dendritic growth and differentiation will remain a key contribution to the field for a long time to come and has given our school recognition at both the national and international levels,” he says. “His constant stirring to maintain high standards for himself and the school represented an example for all to follow. There is no doubt that Dennis Higgins will be missed in so many ways.”

Higgins earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Boston College and a doctorate in pharmacology from the University of Connecticut Health Center. He joined the UB faculty as an assistant professor in 1983 and was promoted to full professor in 1997. Higgins’ research interests focused on neurobiology, neuropeptide receptors and signal transduction. His laboratory was working to identify the mechanisms that control dendritic growth in sympathetic autonomic neurons.

He was program director for developmental neuroscience for the National Science Foundation (NSF), and served as a member of the NSF’s Science and Technology Center Review Panel and its Developmental Neuroscience Scientific Advisory Panel. He was also an ad hoc member and a regular member of study sections for the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Author or coauthor of numerous scholarly publications, Higgins was a member of the editorial board for Biomedical Research. Survivors include his wife, Cheryl; sons Kerry (Jake) Cassel and Derek; grandson, Kayle; and sister, Maureen Gonsalves of Chicago.

Murray Stinson, PhD
Professor of microbiology and immunology

Murray W. Stinson, PhD, professor and associate chair of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology in the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, died January 11, 2006, at Roswell Park Cancer Institute after a brief illness. He was 62.

A native of Richmond/Gardner, ME, Stinson received a bachelor’s degree cum laude from Springfield College and master’s and doctoral degrees in microbiology from Rutgers University.

In 1969, he joined the UB Department of Microbiology, and in 1987 was promoted to full professor. At that time, in recognition of his expertise in infections related to dental diseases, he was invited to join the faculty of the Department of Oral Biology in the School of Dental Medicine. “If one were to single out a feature of Murray’s personality that best characterized his lifelong and successful career, it would be his ability to stand back from an issue, pick out the essential features surrounding that issue, and then come to a definite conclusion about how to handle it,” says John Hoy, PhD, Professor and Grant T. Fisher Chair of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology. “Murray’s colleagues and students will miss his storehouse of knowledge, both scientific and social, his calm approach to life’s bad patches, and his open office door. It is unfair that an individual commands extensive respect and affection. Murray was one of these rare individuals. Stinson’s research, which focused on the causes of streptococcal infections, was continuously funded for 23 years through competitive grants awarded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).”

He served as departmental director of graduate studies and director of the undergraduate major’s program in microbiology, where he routinely lectured to graduate, dental and medical students on microbial pathogenesis. In addition, he planned and executed the infectious diseases and immunology portion of the medical school’s new curriculum.

Stinson was a member of the Medical School Executive Committee, the Steering Committee of the Medical Scientist Training Program, the Health Sciences Divisional Committee of the Graduate School, the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Biomedical Sciences, and the curriculum committees of the medical school and the School of Nursing. In addition, he was a member of the Presidential Disease Research Center for 17 years.

He served as an editorial reviewer for numerous journals in his field, including the Journal of Infectious Diseases and Infectious Immunology, and was invited to participate as a grant reviewer for the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute of Dental Medicine, as well as for other agencies and institutions.

As a senior professor at UB, Stinson was a founding member of the professorial advisory group that counseled junior faculty in career development.

—Sue Wuthrich
Causes of Facial, Jaw Pain

UB receives $3.3 Million to study TMJ risk factors

The UB School of Dental Medicine has received $3.3 million to participate in the first large-scale prospective clinical study of risk factors that contribute to the development of temporomandibular joint and muscle disorders (TMJMD).

The multicenter project, called Orofacial Pain: Prospective Evaluation and Risk Assessment (OPPERA), is funded by a $15.1 million grant from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR).

Four institutions will participate in the seven-year study: UB, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which will serve as the lead institution. Battelle in Gainesville, the University of Maryland in Baltimore, and the University of Florida in Gainesville, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which will serve as the lead institution. Battelle.

Richard Ohrbach, DDS, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Oral Diagnostic Sciences, will head the UB study. "The significance of this study is that it simultaneously addresses both the genotype and the phenotype of participants and how the interactions between these two unfold over time to influence the experience of pain," says Ohrbach. Genotype refers to an individual’s inborn biological potential or destiny, while phenotype is the observable or measurable clinical and constitutional characteristics of the individual.

Recent developments in genetics pertaining to polymorphisms (variations in gene expression) and in the ability to measure how much pain sensation is being transmitted to the brain’s pain centers are the scientific bases underlying this next step in pain research," Ohrbach says. TMJMD is an umbrella term for a group of conditions that affect the area in and around the two large ball-and-socket joints that connect the jaw to the skull on both sides of the head, the muscles involved in chewing, or both. Common symptoms include persistent pain in the jaw muscles, restricted jaw movement, jaw locking, and abnormal popping and clicking of the joint.

How many people have TMJMD is not known, but the NIDCR estimates that the main symptoms—pain and restricted jaw movement—occur in 5 to 15 percent of Americans. TMJMD may be more common in women than men, and while some conditions can be linked to physical trauma, in most cases the cause is unknown.

For more information on the UB study and its methodology, visit the UB News Services’ website at www.buffalo.edu/news and search “TMJMD.”

UB receives $3.3 Million to study TMJ risk factors

Because patients with Type 1 diabetes cannot produce their own insulin, human stem cell-based transplants that produce insulin would be a major breakthrough.

Current laboratory methods of culturing human stem cells result in very limited quantities, far short of the quantities necessary for therapeutic applications.

Divide and Conquer
Boosting stem cells to treat diabetes

For nursing homes or your home.
For anyone who needs us.
Whenever you are — at home, or in a hospital or nursing home — Hospice care will come to you. And with a whole team of doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains and counselors to help, you’ll receive more support than you can imagine.
Hospice: A plan for living.
686-8027 hospicebuffalo.com

His ultimate goal is to conduct research to develop methods that will allow sufficient quantities of differentiated cells that secrete insulin to be produced from the stem cells.

"One of the main obstacles to using stem cells as any kind of human treatment is that you need many more cells than now can be produced in laboratory systems," says Tzanakakis. "The key questions are, ‘How do you generate large quantities of cells for patients?’ and ‘How do you get them to differentiate to a specific cell type?’ Working with adult and embryonic stem cells derived from both mice and humans, Tzanakakis and other groups use bioreactor systems, vessels containing growth media and stem cells, that have the potential to produce high densities of cells that will properly develop the embryonic pancreas to make insulin. "One of the main obstacles to using stem cells as any kind of human treatment is that you need many more cells than now can be produced in laboratory systems," says Tzanakakis. "The key questions are, ‘How do you generate large quantities of cells for patients?’ and ‘How do you get them to differentiate to a specific cell type?’ Working with adult and embryonic stem cells derived from both mice and humans, Tzanakakis and other groups use bioreactor systems, vessels containing growth media and stem cells, that have the potential to produce high densities of cells that will properly develop the embryonic pancreas to make insulin.

Before coming to UB in 2004, Tzanakakis held postdoctoral positions at the Diabetes Center in the Department of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and at the Stem Cell Institute in the Department of Medicine at the University of Minnesota.

He also has received funding for this research from the juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.