LSUHSC’s Cefalu named best geriatrician

Dr. Charles Cefalu, Professor of Medicine, won the Geriatric Physician category of the 2011 Dorland Health Silver Crown Awards. An article on Dr. Cefalu in Case in Point Magazine lauds Dr. Cefalu’s dedication as Chief of the LSUHSC Section of Geriatric Medicine and his distinguished service as the executive director of the Louisiana Geriatrics Society, where he champions the needs of the elderly.

It continues, “Through his diligent efforts in training and unsurpassed passion for elderly care, Cefalu has created a program through which senior caretakers will be well advised and ready to tackle the pressing issues of the geriatric population. Through his devout stewardship at LSU, the training program has grown and through its growth, the region and the healthcare system will be blessed with ardent Cefalu proteges.”

LSUHSC research finds protein that protects cancer cells from chemo & radiation therapy and what blocks it

Research led by Daitoku Sakamuro, PhD, Assistant Professor of Pathology at LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans and the LSUHSC Stanley S. Scott Cancer Center, has identified a protein that enables the activation of a DNA-repair enzyme that protects cancer cells from catastrophic damage caused by chemo and radiation therapy. This protein, called c-MYC oncoprotein, can initiate and promote almost all human cancers and discovering the role it plays in cancer treatment resistance may lead to advances that save lives. The work is published in the March 29, 2011 issue of Science Signaling, a publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Although scientists have known that cancer cells can acquire resistance to DNA-damaging therapeutic agents, the genetic mechanisms through which this occurs have remained unclear until now.

Using the chemotherapy drug, cisplatin (which is commonly used as a first-line therapy for various cancers) to design a set of experiments, the research team found that the c-MYC oncoprotein increases cisplatin resistance by decreasing production of a c-MYC inhibitor called BIN1. BIN1 suppressed an enzyme essential for DNA repair, and the sensitivity of cancer cells to cisplatin depended upon BIN1 abundance. Overproducing the c-MYC oncoprotein repressed BIN1, blocking its life-saving action.

“Our study provides a potent and novel mechanism through which cancer acquires resistance to DNA damage,” notes Dr. Sakamuro. “Inhibition of oncogenic c-MYC may provide an attractive strategy for cancer therapy in combination with DNA-damaging agents.”

Students, faculty, alumni elected to AOA

Please congratulate the following individuals who have been elected to the Beta of Louisiana Chapter of Alpha Omega Alpha, the national medical honor society: Kevin Bray, Emily Burgin, Juan Carlos de Rivero Vaccari, Patricia Gallagher, Kimberly Hoffpauir, Sophia Mai, Kyle McMullen, Jerry Miller, III, Stephen Spindel, James Steves, Dr. Rebekah Godeaux, Dr. Tathagat "Tiger" Narula, Dr. Robert "Field" Smith, Dr. Erich Conrad, Dr. Madeleine "Midge" Heck, Dr. William Davis, and Dr. Evelyn Kluka.
Officer and cadets from the United States Military Academy at West Point helped students from Andrew Wilson Charter School learn more about science, technology, engineering, and mathematics last Friday evening on the LSU Health Sciences Center campus. A partnership of West Point, Congressman Cedric Richmond (LA-2), and our public health and medical school brought the Academy's Center for Leadership and Diversity in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Mobile Workshop to New Orleans for the first time.

After a brief presentation on bridge engineering by LTC Donald A. Outing, PhD, Director of the Center for Leadership and Diversity in STEM at West Point, 6th, 7th and 8th graders from Andrew Wilson Charter Schools were split into teams and challenged to design and build a K'NEX bridge with physical building apparatuses. With officers and cadets available for questions, the exercise allowed the students the opportunity for independent creative thought and to work as a team to solve problems. The bridges' structural integrity was tested using a model humvee weighed down with blackberries and smartphones. Not only did each team complete the project (also a first), they all built sound bridges.

The project is meant to be fun and thought provoking for young students and to prepare the next generations for a world where creativity and innovation will be needed more than ever to solve problems and succeed.

Xtend Barre raises funds for LSUHSC Outreach Program

The Grand Opening of the Xtend Barre studio at 3225 Danny Park, Suite 201 in Metairie raised nearly $1,200 for the LA Breast & Cervical Health Program at the LSUHSC School of Public Health. Owner Kim Muno, RN wanted to extend the health benefits of the workouts by partnering with LSUHSC to make them count toward helping the breast and cervical cancer cause.