UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA | Institute on Aging | VA GRECC

Spring '12

THE Continuum

From Bench to Bedside

Update on the Clinical and Translational Research Building Construction

Photo by Maria Farias

Our institute's new home is starting to take shape. Scheduled for completion in spring 2013, the UF Clinical and Translational Research Building, or CTRB, will house the Institute on Aging, the Clinical and Translational Science Institute and other clinical research departments and programs.

The 120,000-square-foot complex is funded by the University of Florida and the NIH National Center for Research Resources, through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Its eco-friendly, sustainable design exceeds the platinum level of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, rating system of the U.S Green Building Council.

"We are elated at the visible progress and delighted about the ways in which the completed facility will help move our scientific discoveries forward."

- Marco Pahor, M.D.

"Reinforcing the connectivity between the Health Science Center and the rest of the university campus, the CTRB will offer UF's clinicians and health services researchers an unparalleled opportunity for close collaboration and interdisciplinary partnerships leading to innovations and advances in medicine," said Marco Pahor, M.D., director of the UF Institute on Aging and chair of the department of aging and geriatric research.

Director's Message

Dear Friends of the IOA,

We are proud to announce that three months ahead of schedule, recruitment for the Lifestyle Interventions and Independence for Elders, or LIFE, study is now complete. With a combined total of 1,635 participants, all eight study sites met or surpassed their targets. This outstanding achievement demonstrates an impressive level of expertise and dedication to the research effort.

The LIFE study is a multicenter, six-year randomized controlled trial among older adults who are at risk of mobility disability because of a sedentary lifestyle. The study will determine whether physical activity or health education can prevent or delay major movement disability.

The University of Pittsburgh led recruitment with 216 participants assigned to intervention groups. Pennington Biomedical Research Center was second, with 208. The other results were as follows: Wake Forest University, 205; Northwestern University, 203; Tufts University, 202; University of Florida, 201; and Yale University, 200.

The participant pool is diverse, with racial and ethnic minorities accounting for almost 25 percent.

The first paper from the study, describing the research design and methods, was published in 2011 in the Journals of Gerontology, Series A: Biological Sciences, Medical Sciences.

Congratulations to all members of the LIFE study teams for this outstanding accomplishment.

For more information, call 352-273-5919 and ask about "The LIFE Study."

Marco Pahor

Symposium Update

LIFE Ancillary Study Symposium

The LIFE Ancillary Study Symposium will be held March 26-27 in Washington, D.C. We hope that after the meeting you will have an energized vision of how the LIFE Study and the biological samples repository can be incorporated into your research.

We are also pleased to announce an exceptional panel of speakers, including Marco Pahor, Jack Guralnik, Luigi Ferrucci, Roger Fielding, Monty Montano, Chris Newgard, Russell Tracy, Christy Ballantyne, Wilson Tang, Carl Cotman, Art Kramer, David Melzer and Bruce Psaty. We are grateful that they have agreed to share their expertise and provide guidance in the development of novel ancillary studies to the LIFE Study.

For the symposium agenda or other information, email Jane Lu at janelu@ufl.edu or call 352-265-7227.

Aging, Memory and Cognitive Decline Symposium

Teaching an old brain new tricks: The aging brain works differently to make up for lost function

For some, successful aging means looking and acting like the young. But not when it comes to the brain. Imaging and molecular studies show that even when older adults perform at a high level, their brains often don't do things in the same way as young people's brains. In fact, it's low-performing older adults whose brain activity often looks like that of younger folks. Older brains have a way of making up for age-related losses in function by finding different ways to get things done, making adjustments in terms of space, time or connectivity between regions.

The findings suggest a different picture from the idea of aging simply as inexorable decline. Understanding how older brains compensate for losses could lead to new methods for detecting cognitive decline early and therapies for boosting brain activity.

"The brain is a very complex machine. It can go wrong in many different ways, but it can also improve productivity in many different ways," said neuroscientist Roberto Cabeza, Ph.D., a Duke University professor who gave the keynote address Feb. 29 at the McKnight Brain Institute symposium on aging, memory and cognitive decline.

The symposium, sponsored by the McKnight Brain Research Foundation, featured multidisciplinary presentations from scientists in the departments of neuroscience, aging and geriatric research, bioengineering and clinical health psychology. Topics ranged from molecular mechanisms to human clinical trials. Ronald Cohen, M.D., the newly appointed director of UF's Cognitive Aging and Memory Clinical Translational Research Program, spoke on the influence of cardiovascular disease and body weight changes on cognitive decline.

Research Highlights

Another Reason to Shed Excess Pounds

It is well known that among older adults, obesity increases the risk of functional decline and disability, which, in turn, leads to poorer quality of life and increased health care costs.

That excess body weight negatively affects our ability to carry out our daily activities even before we become aware of difficulties, according to new findings from the UF College of Medicine department of aging and geriatric research, published in the journal Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics.

Physical disability in some older adults occurs gradually over time. And although many people don't notice the subtle changes in how they perform their daily tasks, they spontaneously develop ways to compensate. Such coping methods include holding on to handrails when climbing stairs or using arm rests to propel the body out of a chair.

The UF study, led by assistant professor Todd Manini, Ph.D., revealed that among 259 older adults, those who were obese were almost 20 times more likely than their normal-weight counterparts to use such methods to compensate.

Even among people who did not say they had day-to-day difficulties, obesity made it especially hard to do tasks that involve the lower limbs. In addition, the extra weight could cause people to become fearful of moving, so they no longer engage in their usual activities.

"That's why maintaining a healthy weight is key to reducing the risk of disability later," Manini said.

Announcements

Welcome to Our New Faculty and Staff:

Assistant Scientist and Visiting Research Scholar Sandrine Sourdet, M.D.; William Marena, Clinical Research Division Manager; Chul Han, Post Doctoral Associate in the Biology of Aging Division; Will Hotchkiss, Driver; Marie McConnell, Receptionist in the Health Promotion Center; Chaitalee (Sherry) Goswamy, Phlebotomist and Study Coordinator; and Irina Korytov, M.D., Compliance Officer.

Congratulations to Dr. Stephen Anton for his appointment as Clinical Research Interim Division Chief, to Dr. Todd Manini for the leadership role in the LIFE study field center, to Dr. Thomas Buford for the Assistant Professor position, and to Dr. Anna-Maria Joseph for the Assistant Scientist position.

Opportunities to Participate In Research Studies:

If you are interested in participating in a current or future Institute on Aging study, you can now enroll in our Institutional Review Board-approved recruitment registry. To enroll or obtain additional information, email Recruit@Aging.ufl.edu or call Cardie Dielschneider at 352-273-5919 or 866-386-7730 (toll free).

New Positions:

For employment opportunities, please e-mail Camelia Pascu at cpascu@ufl.edu.

Spotlight

Shinichi Someya, Ph.D. recently joined the Institute on Aging and the biology of aging division of the department of aging and geriatric research, as an assistant professor. Previously, he was an assistant scientist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. After earning his bachelor's degree at the University of California, Berkeley in 1991, Someya earned his doctoral degree in applied biological chemistry at the University of Tokyo, Japan, in 2005. He investigates molecular mechanisms of inner ear aging, age-related hearing loss and prevention of age-related hearing loss through caloric restriction.

Sandrine Sourdet, M.D. is an assistant scientist in the clinical research division of the department of aging and geriatric research. She earned postgraduate degrees in public health and geriatric medicine at the University Paul Sabatier in Toulouse, France, and is pursuing a Ph.D. in epidemiology. After four years of medical residency in geriatric medicine, Sourdet became the chief resident at a teaching hospital. She worked in an Alzheimer's disease special care unit offering diagnostic evaluation for patients with mild cognitive impairment or dementia. Dr. Sourdet plans to research disability prevention among elderly patients.

Chul Han, Ph.D. is a postdoctoral associate in the biology of aging division of the department of aging and geriatric research. With funding from an RO3 grant from the National Institutes of Health, he investigates how age-related hearing loss occurs and how restricting calories can prevent the condition. Han, whose background is in genetic engineering and molecular studies, earned his doctorate through UF's Interdisciplinary Program in Biomedical Sciences and the College of Medicine's department of physiology. He works in the laboratory of Shinichi Someya, Ph.D.

Pratibha Lumb, M.D. received her medical degree in 2007, from Crimea State Medical University in Ukraine. She did her residency at a multispecialty hospital in northern India. She gained clinical experience in internal medicine and gynecology in both inpatient and outpatient settings. Dr. Lumb assists with the Testosterone Trial as a research scholar in the clinical division of the department of aging and geriatric research. She plans to pursue postgraduate training in geriatrics.

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Make a Gift

Giving to the Institute on Aging

...why every dollar counts

Unlocking life's mysteries – particularly the secrets of how long and how well we live – is the distinct focus of the University of Florida's Institute on Aging. Our scientists and physicians are dedicated to achieving better understanding of the mechanisms of aging and how we can maintain or enhance our physical independence and cognitive abilities.

Private philanthropy is so essential to our work. Your gift, regardless of size, can make the critical difference in funding new scientific endeavors. Imagine discoveries that fuel positive cellular changes; identify new therapies that help rehabilitate aging bones and joints; or uncover additional pharmaceutical allies. Private philanthropy makes all this and much more possible.

To learn more about how you can invest in a healthier and more independent tomorrow for us all, please contact Mary Ann Kiely at 352-273-9620 or email mkiely@ufl.edu.

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