The Tulane Section of Pulmonary Diseases and Critical Care Medicine is delighted to announce the addition of two new faculty members, Dr. Tom Kennedy and Dr. Cathy Wentowski. Our mission of patient care, education and research continues to make strides with both new and continuing programs, studies and research.

Joseph A. Lasky, MD

Message from the Section Chief

Ph is a complex and life-changing disease that often demands comprehensive and coordinated care, an array of auxiliary services and intensive therapeutics. Our team of pulmonologists, cardiologists, rheumatologists, dedicated nurse specialists, social workers, nutritionists and other sub-specialists will provide comprehensive inpatient and outpatient care for patients living with PH. We have implemented standardized protocols and an operational model of hospital practice, with the goal of becoming fully accredited by the Pulmonary Hypertension Association (PHA). "We envision that this center will develop into a premiere PH center in the South, gain a national reputation for excellence in PH care, and expand our clinical and basic science research initiatives to advance the study and treatment of PH," said Dr. Shigeki Saito, CPHC co-director and Assistant Professor of Medicine at Tulane University. The center is co-directed by Dr. deBoisblanc from LSU and Dr. Saito from Tulane. Other patient care providers include Dr. Matthew Lammi (LSU Pulmonary), Dr. Lesley Saketko (Tulane Rheumatology), Dr. Frank Smart and Dr. Vijay Jaligam (LSU Cardiology) and Dr. Abhishek Jaiswal (Tulane Cardiology). Activities at CPHC will extend beyond clinical care. Faculty and staff will also provide education and community outreach efforts such as PH patient support groups and education programs focusing on nutrition and healthy lifestyles, and support the PHA in their efforts to increase awareness of PH. The center will also serve as a resource for patients who wish to enroll into clinical PH trials. Moreover, it will include a basic science research arm, and thereby build upon past contributions from the Tulane Department of Pharmacology, which nurtured the research of Nobel Prize Laureate, Louis Ignarro. Dr. Ignarro’s research demonstrated that nitric oxide serves the functions of vasorelaxant and inhibitor of platelet aggregation, with both effects mediated by cyclic GMP.
Welcome Thomas Kennedy, MD, MPH

Dr. Thomas Kennedy joins as Professor of Medicine. Dr. Kennedy is a native of Zachary, Louisiana, graduated from Louisiana Tech University and Vanderbilt Medical School. He completed his internal medicine residency and pulmonary and critical care fellowship at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, and his occupational residency and Masters in Public Health at The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Hygiene and Public Health. He has previously served on the medical faculties at Johns Hopkins, the University of Tennessee, Duke University, the University of North Carolina, the University of Utah and Georgia Regents University (formerly Medical College of Georgia). He has a clinical interest in pulmonary and critical care medicine, with an emphasis in critical care, and in environmental and occupational lung diseases. He has done clinical research in occupational lung diseases.

Dr. Kennedy’s basic research interest centers on the anti-inflammatory pharmacology of sulfated polysaccharides. He developed a process for removing the anticoagulant activity from unfractionated heparin through selective hydrolysis of 2-O and 3-O sulfates from the polymer, leaving a derivative that has <5% of the anticoagulant activity of the parent heparin. This drug has shown broad anti-inflammatory activity in cell culture and animal models, and is currently undergoing human phase 2 clinical trials as an intravenously administered cancer support drug to speed bone marrow production of platelets and neutrophils after cancer chemotherapy. The NIAID has recently awarded Dr. Kennedy, the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Institute a $5.5 million award to develop a subcutaneous formulation of this heparin derivative for use in treating radiation injury.

At Tulane, Dr. Kennedy hopes to collaborate with Tulane’s tropical medicine investigators to explore the utility of using this heparin analog to block cell attachment and infection of human infectious pathogens, including filoviruses such as Ebola and parasites such as malaria. Because heparin is an animal derived product from porcine intestine, Dr. Kennedy has also partnered with Dr. Glenn Prestwich, Presidential Professor of Medicinal Chemistry at the University of Utah, to develop a family of synthetic heparin-like anti-inflammatory polymers constructed by sulfating and alkylating pharmaceutical grade hyaluronic acid. Dr. Kennedy and Dr. Prestwich are currently developing these sulfated hyaluronans for topical therapies of human illnesses, including periodontal disease, radiation injury of the oral cavity, and interstitial cystitis of the bladder.

When he is not working, Dr. Kennedy enjoys spending time with his wife Deborah and two daughters Mary Scott (an attorney in Charlotte, NC) and Callie (a junior at UNC Chapel Hill majoring in pre-medical studies). He is also a runner, fisherman and duck hunter. An avid reader and history buff, he has particularly enjoyed acquainting himself with the rich history and cultural texture of New Orleans since moving back to Louisiana, and has relished being near his brother in Madisonville, with whom he fishes and hunts.

Catherine Wentowski, MD
Joins Faculty

We have recently welcomed Catherine Wentowski, MD, to our Pulmonary faculty. Dr. Wentowski holds a medical degree from St. George’s University School of Medicine in Grenada, West Indies, and a Masters in Public Health with a focus in Epidemiology and Biostatistics from the Boston University School of Public Health. She completed her fellowship training at Tulane in Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine in 2014 and was appointed Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine in August.

Her clinical and research interests include transfusion practices in critical care, lung transplant epidemiology, the use of critical care ultrasound, and medical education. Dr. Wentowski comments, “I am extremely happy to join the Tulane Section of Pulmonary, Critical Care, and Environmental Medicine. I am looking forward to participating in both the clinical and academic aspects of our practice.”

Fayez Kheir, MD
Aids in Training Programs

Dr. Fayez Kheir has been selected to participate in the American Thoracic Society’s (ATS) Guideline Methodology Training Program. This program will allow members interested in systematic reviews and/or clinical practice guideline methodology to collaborate, troubleshoot methodological challenges, and discuss cutting edge developments in evidence appraisal and guideline development.

(cont’d. on p. 3)
Improving Asthma Outcomes Across Louisiana

Nereida A. Parada, MD FAAAI FCCP, integrated asthma care in the Tulane Lung Center and has been involved in Asthma Population Management (APM) at Charity Hospital since 2000. Her focus has been to incorporate guidelines driven processes of asthma care at Charity Hospital. These have included: written asthma action plans (WAAP), appropriate testing (PFTs and allergy tests), asthma control test (ACT), appropriate medications (bronchodilators, inhaled steroids, and long acting bronchodilators when needed), smoking assessment and cessation, and vaccinations. The importance of patient education has been a central component of APM with classes and teaching during clinic visits.

She became the Asthma Clinical Lead for LSU Health Care Services Division (HCSD) in October 2009. As such, she has been able to share the tools created for Charity Hospital, now Interim LSU Hospital, her asthma expertise and active leadership across seven LSU safety net hospitals. Many patients have benefited from this integrated asthma care approach with a decrease in ED visits at every single hospital and in the LSU system by 27%. An expansion to incorporate COPD with distinct measures driven by COPD guidelines occurred in 2013.

As LSU Health Care Services Division Asthma and COPD Clinical Lead, Dr. Parada continues to strive for better outcomes for asthma patients cared for in the new partnerships created with the previous LSU safety net hospitals. Her current focus is to identify allergies in asthmatics patients with the aim to incorporate immunotherapy and biologicals to help allergic asthmatics gain control of asthma. In addition, an LSU HCSD Pulmonary Interest Group has been formed that will focus on a variety of important questions that will lead to tools to help providers assess for the Asthma COPD Overlap Syndrome (ACOS) and improve outcomes. The new GINA guidelines in 2014 devote a whole section to ACOS that is associated with worse outcomes and worse asthma control. It is now recognized that severe asthma as a child increases COPD risk later in life by 32 fold. In addition, some asthmatics who smoke may also develop COPD. Smoking cessation is of paramount importance for these asthmatics.

Dr. Parada’s contact information is (504) 988-2250 for the academic office and (504) 988-8600 for clinical appointments at the Tulane Lung Center.

A Leap Forward to Cure a Neglected Disease

Dr. Sanchez recently reached her crowdfunding support goal to advance her research directed towards a cure for Chagas Disease. This research will support work that employs an animal model of disease with a strong translational opportunity. The relevance of her work to Louisiana is related to the identification of the parasite in local animal populations.

The World Health Organization estimates that as many as 11 million people worldwide are infected with the parasite Trypanosoma cruzi. The parasite T. cruzi uses triatomines, or "kissing bugs" as a vector. The T. cruzi life cycle alternates between an insect vector and vertebrate host. Triatomines are most common in Mexico, Central America and South America, but more than 10 species are now known to be distributed across the southeastern U.S. Chagas disease is thought to be the single most common cause of nonischemic congestive heart

Dr. Kheir (cont’d. from p. 2)

Dr. Kheir, in collaboration with Dr. Dustyn Williams, has developed a longitudinal point of care ultrasound (POCUS) curriculum for Tulane third year medical students in LEAD (Leadership, Education, Advocacy, and Discovery) Program at Tulane’s Baton Rouge clinical campus. The curriculum will consist of didactic lectures and hands-on training in POCUS. This will not only help students connect what they learned from basic science courses, anatomy laboratory, and basic clinical foundations, but also help students be better prepared for their future careers.
failure and sudden death in the world and the leading cause of death among middle-aged adults in endemic areas of Latin America.

The classical onset of symptoms in chronic Chagas occurs 35 to 45 years after the primary infection. In the U.S., Chagas appears to be increasing in prevalence due to migration of people from endemic areas and congenital transmission. This disease, which was once thought to be confined to endemic regions of Latin America, has now gone global. More than 300,000 people with Chagas disease live in the U.S. An estimated 63 to 315 babies acquire *T. cruzi* infection congenitally in the U.S. every year, but most infections go undetected and untreated. Despite its medical importance, the pathobiology of chronic Chagas disease is not fully understood and there are no drugs on the market that specifically target Chagas disease.

Dr. Sanchez demonstrated the existence of conserved pathways shared between organ fibrogenesis in the host and the life cycle of the parasite *T. cruzi*. She proposes to target these pathways to treat chronic Chagas disease. The crowdfunding supported Dr. Sanchez’s preliminary findings, indicating that a drug already in use for other purposes can stop the life cycle of the parasite and the progressive heart disease. Dr. Sanchez’s laboratory has established a strong collaboration with Dr. Dumonteil and Dr. Wesson’s laboratory from the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. For more information: https://experiment.com/projects/a-leap-forward-to-cure-a-neglected-disease.

Dr. Sanchez is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine, Section of Pulmonary Diseases. Her laboratory focuses on understanding the mechanisms of fibrosis and aging. Her goal is to develop new therapeutic paradigms for chronic fibrotic disorders, including idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, scleroderma and cardiomyopathy.