

The M. D. Anderson Connection

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Molecular geneticist Saunders dies

Gradly Saunders, Ph.D., who made profound contributions to the field of human molecular genetics during almost four decades at M. D. Anderson, died Aug. 26 in a local hospital.

One of the founding members of the M. D. Anderson Alumni and Faculty Association Steering Committee and committee chair from 2000-2003, Saunders was widely known for research that advanced understanding of the cellular kinetics involved in activating genes and translating their information into the many proteins that control cell development. He led the team that originally mapped the gene responsible for Wilms' tumor, a kidney cancer affecting primarily children, and his group was the first to clone the human aniridia gene linked with progressive loss of vision.

For many years, Saunders' research laid the groundwork for molecular biology discoveries in other laboratories. He contributed to almost 200 scientific journal articles and edited six books. In addition, he directly supervised 30 students at The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, where he taught courses in molecular biology and human genetics. He also mentored almost 90 predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows.



Grady Saunders, Ph.D.

"Dr. Saunders has combined productive pioneering research with a passion for teaching future scientists for nearly 40 years. His M. D. Anderson peers selected him for our first Faculty Achievement Award in Education

given in 1992 and honored him again in 1995 with our Faculty Achievement Award in Basic Research," explained Margaret Kripke, M.D., executive vice president and chief academic officer.

Saunders was born July 11, 1938, in Bakersfield, Calif. After receiving bachelor's and master's degrees at Oregon State University, he earned his Ph.D. in microbiology at

the University of Illinois in 1965. He completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Institute de Biologie Physico-Chimique in Paris before joining the M. D. Anderson faculty in 1966 as an assistant professor of biochemistry.

In 1972, Saunders was selected to be an exchange scientist from the United States to the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in Moscow. Saunders advanced to full professor in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in 1978.

Memorial contributions can be made to M. D. Anderson. Check the Development Office Internet site at <http://www.mdanderson.org/departments/development/> for information about making contributions to the institution.

New quarterly Q&A seminar series to debut

The M. D. Anderson Alumni and Faculty Association Steering Committee, along with the Department of Trainee and Alumni Affairs, is pleased to announce the Practical Approach to Multidisciplinary Care Series. The question and answer-style sessions, designed to reconnect alumni and community physicians and researchers with M. D. Anderson, will take place four times a year in a panel format or by individual speaker, depending on the topic. In deciding topics and speakers, consideration will be made for those that pharmaceutical companies may wish to underwrite.

First up for the series will be Lyle Green, associate vice president for Physician Relations, and Alan Powell, director of Internet Services, who will discuss a new Web-based service, myMDanderson for Physicians, now being used to improve communications and service between M. D. Anderson and the larger medical community. The first presentation will take place in early December. For specific date and location, visit the Association's Web site.



Alan Powell



Lyle Green

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M. D. Anderson Alumni and Faculty Association information is available on the Internet: www.mdanderson.org/departments/andersonassoc

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CANCER CENTER
Making Cancer History®

Alumnus supports free lodging, fresh loaves at Hospitality Apartments

Thomas Matney, Ph.D., knows a good deal when he sees one, and he thinks the leadership of M. D. Anderson does, too.

Matney, a retired distinguished professor of biomedical sciences at The University of Texas School of Public Health at Houston and emeritus member of the UT Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston faculty, serves as a trustee for the Hospitality Apartments, located just south of the Texas Medical Center at 7219 Cecil.

The apartments provide free temporary housing and a supportive environment for families in need who must come to Houston for treatment in the Texas Medical Center hospitals. What started in 1968 as a rented fourplex in a converted World War II barracks building has expanded into a fully-funded, four-building complex with 42 apartments. The Hospitality Apartments have served more than 5,400 families from 49 states and 62 foreign countries, all free of charge.

Next year, the apartments will be rebuilt on adjacent land as M. D. Anderson extends Bertner

Avenue through its Mid Campus. "M. D. Anderson generously swapped land with us and paid us the depreciated value of the apartments," Matney says. "They recognize the value this foundation provides for its patients and they want to see it continue."

While guests are referred by social workers at hospitals throughout the Texas Medical Center, more than 90 percent of all guests are patients from M. D. Anderson. Eligible guests must live more than 100 miles from M. D. Anderson and require a stay between three weeks and three months. About 100 volunteers staff the debt-free foundation; expenses are paid by more than 20 local churches, civic organizations and corporations.

Every time someone new checks in, Joe Hightower, Ph.D., president and co-founder of the apartments, presents each guest with a fresh loaf of sourdough bread he bakes personally at his home.



Joe Hightower, Ph.D. (left), with Thomas Matney, Ph.D.

"The families staying there develop a real esprit de corps, much like what I see at M. D. Anderson," says Matney, who has been treated himself for prostate cancer at the institution.

To volunteer at the Hospitality Apartments, to host a monthly fellowship dinner or make a donation, call Thomas Matney at (713) 348-5906.

Trainee spotlight: Ilyssa Gordon

Since serving on the steering committee from 2003 to 2005, and spearheading the annual Trainee Seminar Series, Ilyssa Gordon is keeping busy with new pursuits. She received her Ph.D. in biomedical science (immunology) in August and expects to receive her M.D. in May.

Gordon is taking part in the M.D./Ph.D. program at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston. The program is typically seven years long, with most students completing three years of medical school before starting full-time graduate work. Similar programs in the rest of the country usually start graduate school after only two years of medical school.

"By encouraging us to complete the third year (clinical year) of med

school before entering the lab, our program emphasizes the connection between the clinic and the lab, and encourages the pursuit of translational research,"

Gordon says.

"Also, the third year of med school can be emotionally taxing — long hours, actually caring for sick patients. Our directors feel this is best approached by students who are working together with the same classmates they have grown to know over the first two years."



Ilyssa Gordon

Trainee recognition day, call for abstracts

M. D. Anderson will recognize and exhibit the excellent research of its trainees Friday, May 26, 2006, during the Ninth Annual Trainee Recognition Day and Research Exposition.

The first call for abstracts will take place sometime in January 2006. All alumni are invited to attend. For more information, call (713) 794-1955.

David Hussey selected for Alumnus Award

David Hussey, M.D., professor of radiation oncology at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, is M. D. Anderson's Distinguished Alumnus Award recipient for 2005. Hussey will accept the award during M. D. Anderson's Faculty Honors Convocation on Nov. 10.

Hussey began his association with M. D. Anderson as a fellow in radiation oncology from 1968 to 1969, and was a faculty member from 1969 to 1983. He is the current president of the Radiological Society of North America.

Alumni, faculty enjoy 4th annual Houston dinner

The M. D. Anderson Alumni and Faculty Association hosted its fourth annual Houston M. D. Anderson Alumni Dinner Oct. 22 at the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Houston.

John Mendelsohn, M.D., president of M. D. Anderson, welcomed the crowd of more than 400.

Edward Kim, M.D., assistant professor of medicine in Thoracic/Head and Neck Medical Oncology, presented the mini-lecture "Update on Epidermal Growth Factor Receptors & Anti-Angiogenesis Agents."

Attendees were treated to an elegant dinner, along with festive Latin music provided by Mango Punch.

This educational program was supported by unrestricted educational grants from Genentech, the Adan A. Rios Foundation and the M. D. Anderson Alumni and Faculty Association.

Trainee Excellence Award winners

In response to the M. D. Anderson Alumni and Faculty Association's call for applications, 80 trainees applied for Trainee Excellence Awards for abstracts, presented at national or international meetings of professional societies. From that group, eight trainees were selected to each receive a \$500 award:

\$500 Trainee Excellence Award:

- Chris Cretokos, B.S., Molecular Genetics
- Lei Guo, M.S., Experimental Therapeutics
- Petra den Hollander, M.S., Molecular and Cellular Oncology
- Chris Neal, Ph.D., Surgical Oncology
- Charles Landen, M.D., Gynecologic Oncology
- Chiyu Wang, M.D., Ph.D., Medical Oncology Fellowship Program
- Wassim Kassouf, M.D., Urologic Oncology
- Rajiv Verma, M.D., Interventional Radiology

Cancer Manager addition

The Gibbs Regional Cancer Center of Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System has formed an alliance with M. D. Anderson Physicians Network, enhancing the level of cancer care available to patients in the upstate (northwest) region of South Carolina.

Spartanburg Regional is the only health care system in South Carolina to have an alliance with the Physicians Network. Because of the quality care Gibbs Regional Cancer Center already provides, Physicians Network selected it as its ally in the fight against cancer, according to David Tubergen, M.D., medical director of Physicians Network.

Spartanburg Regional is one of five health care systems in the nation to provide services under the M. D. Anderson Cancer Manager Program, a full-service cancer disease management program developed and directed by physicians at M. D. Anderson.

Other Cancer Manager host sites are:

- Baptist Medical Center, Jackson, Miss.
- Baptist Memorial Health Center, Memphis, Tenn.
- Christus Schumpert Health System, Shreveport, La.
- University Health Care System, Augusta, Ga.

Following a three-month implementation period at Gibbs Regional Cancer Center, eligible patients

enrolled in the program can begin receiving care that follows M. D. Anderson's clinical practice guidelines.

Upcoming Events

The following presentations and events may be of interest to M. D. Anderson faculty and alumni. For additional information, check online at www.mdanderson.org/mdacalendar.

- **Nov. 3-6 — Professional Nurse Educator's Group Conference**
Cancer Prevention Building, M. D. Anderson
- **Nov. 10 — Faculty Honors Convocation**
Hickey Auditorium, Main Building, M. D. Anderson
- **Nov. 10-11 — Infections in Cancer Symposium**
Cancer Prevention Building, M. D. Anderson
- **Dec. 7 — Classrooms of the 21st Century**
Cancer Prevention Building, M. D. Anderson
- **Dec. 8-10 — 3rd Annual M. D. Anderson Surgical Pathology Update**
Westin Hotel, Houston
- **Dec. 8-11 — 28th Annual San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium**
San Antonio, TX
- **Dec. 14 — Lunch & Learn and Publications Strategies Panel Discussion with editors-in-chief**
Hickey Auditorium, Main Building, M. D. Anderson

Milestones

M. D. Anderson President **John Mendelsohn, M.D.**, was selected to receive an honorary doctorate in medicine and surgery from the Medical School of the Second University of Naples. It is the highest honor that can be presented by an Italian university. During the ceremony in Naples, Mendelsohn presented a lecture on his research on the EGF receptor inhibitor Erbitux®, and was recognized for his scientific, academic and professional career achievements.

Nancy Perrier, M.D., associate professor of surgical oncology, has been selected to receive the Dennis W. Jahnigen Career Development Scholars Award from the American Geriatrics Society. The award is



Nancy Perrier, M.D.

named for the late Dennis Jahnigen, M.D., a leading educator and geriatrician. The Jahnigen Career Development Scholars Awards Programs, funded by the John A. Hartford Foundation and Atlantic Philanthropies, provides two-year grants of \$200,000 (including an institutional match) to help young faculty initiate and ultimately sustain a career in research and education in the geriatrics aspects of his/her discipline. Perrier was selected based on her proposal, "The Effects of Parathyroidectomy on Cognition and Function in the Elderly," and the sponsorship of her mentors, Douglas Evans, M.D., and Robert Gagel, M.D.

Ellen Gritz, Ph.D., chair of Behavioral Science, is president-elect of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco, an organization of experts from more than 20 nations. The society

meets annually in North America, and also co-sponsors meetings around the world. Gritz will serve as president for the 2006-2007 term. She will continue the society's work of encouraging scientific research on public health efforts to prevent and treat cigarette and tobacco use, as well as providing a way for governmental and other public agencies to receive expert advice and consultation on nicotine and tobacco.



Ellen Gritz, Ph.D.

Margaret Spitz, M.D., chair of Epidemiology, has been appointed by the Institute of Medicine to the new 22-member National Cancer Policy Forum. The forum, which is the successor to the institute's National Cancer Policy Board, is designed to allow government, industry, academic and other representatives to meet and plan privately on areas of interest. The forum will provide a focus within the National Academies for the consideration of issues in science, clinical medicine, public health and public policy relevant to the goals of preventing, palliating and curing cancer.



Margaret Spitz, M.D.

Stephen Ullrich, Ph.D., a professor of immunology, is president-elect of the American Society for Photobiology. His term as president will begin in July 2006. Photobiology is broadly defined as the study of the effects of non-ionizing

radiation on biological systems. Ullrich's area of expertise includes determining how exposure to ultraviolet radiation suppresses immune response and allows for the development of skin cancer.



Stephen Ullrich, Ph.D.

Larry Driver, M.D., associate professor of anesthesiology and pain medicine, is one of six recipients of a 2005-2006



Larry Driver, M.D.

Pain and Society Fellowship awarded by the Mayday Fund. The aim of the three-year fellowship is to provide new leaders in the pain management field with tools that will help them better advocate and communicate with the broader public on pain issues.

Send us your milestones

Your achievements are important to us. Please contact us with your change of address.

Please send recent news we can share with your fellow alumni to:

M. D. Anderson Alumni and Faculty Association
Department of Trainee and Alumni Affairs – Unit 165
M. D. Anderson Cancer Center
1515 Holcombe Blvd.
Houston, Texas 77030

E-mail items to alumni@mdanderson.org or call Sharon Pepper at (713) 563-9194.

Along with details about your news item, please include your name, degree(s), years when you were at M. D. Anderson, current title and affiliation, city, state, country, and a telephone number and e-mail address so we can contact you if we need additional information.