



Arizona Branch AALAS Newsletter

Vol. 19 No. 2
March 2006

Arizona Branch of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science

Have you sent in your membership renewal? If not, see form on last page!

Spring Video Conference: Dr Peder Cuneo with “Veterinary Relief Efforts Following Katrina” - April 7!

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Arizona Branch AALAS Newsletter Arizona Branch AALAS

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President's Message

If you have any questions or comments feel free to contact me. Dr. Timothy Martin - (602)406-4003 or (timothy.martin@chw.edu).

Farewell Message from Past-President Michael Rand

My apologies for this belated farewell message. By way of a flimsy excuse, I was deluged with bureaucratic requirements when I returned from the holidays causing me to miss the deadline.

2005 was filled with memorable events for the Arizona Branch of AALAS. Thanks to the hard work of my fellow board members Dr. Tim Martin, April Wagner, Grace Aranda, Cheryl Johnson, Jane Criswell, Patsy Coffin, James Badman, and Bob Perrill, we were able to have one of our best years ever. The year started off by us first recognizing the importance of you through celebrating the International Laboratory Animal Technician Appreciation Week.

Next on the agenda was the Spring Symposium, which was an excellent learning and social affair for all who attended. The highlights of the Symposium was Dr. Mary Kay Klein's, veterinary oncologist, keynote address stressing the importance that biomedical research has played in her ability to treat her patients; and, also, the unexpected arrival of a large mariachi band during the dinner.

The Summer Video Conference in July went well and featured Kathie Schroeder, certified wildlife rehabber on Wildlife Rehabilitation: Living in Harmony

Important Branch Dates

Spring Video Conference - Apr 7:
1-2:30 p.m. - Katrina Experience
Summer Fun Event - TBA
Fall Video Conference - TBA
National AALAS Meeting in
Salt Lake City - 10/15-19/06
Holiday Installation Event - 12/2/06

with our Wildlife Neighbors. Kathie brought 2 guests with her that made the conference fascinating - a bobcat and a hawk!

Thanks to the hard organizational work of Dr. Martin, the Fall Fun Event at the Phoenix Zoo was extremely worthwhile and enjoyable. It began with a tour of their veterinary facilities, which was very impressive.

We ended the year with the Holiday Installation Event held at Dr. Martin's mansion. It was worth attending just to see the interior displays and decorations! We announced our new board members as well as our District 8 Trustee Dee Drye and Bruce Kennedy, incoming National AALAS Vice President. Most notable was the achievements of Rebecca Hyzer who won the Technician of the Year Award and Grace Aranda who won the Member of the Year Award.

Pictures from most of these events can be viewed at our web site at www.azaalas.org. It is with appreciation that I hand over the reins to Dr. Martin and look forward to the coming year under his leadership. - Dr. Michael Rand

2006 New Board Member Profiles

Chrystal Redding - Branch Secretary

Chrystal Redding was elected to the AzAALAS secretary position for 2006. Congratulations and thank you for serving in this very important position. She has been a member of both National and AzAALAS since 2001. She started as an undergraduate caring for lizards and amphibians in an investigator maintained laboratory in 1999. In 2000 she started working for NAU in the Animal Care Facility as a graduate assistant. After obtaining her B.S. in zoology she became a full time employee and is currently the Animal Care Manager. She is currently working on her masters degree. She has experience in the husbandry of SPF rodents, rabbits, amphibians, reptiles, fish and birds and her specialty is amphibian and reptile care. She manages and coordinates the daily operation of the Animal Care Facility; plans and directs the work of the animal care staff, and assists researchers. She has also been the NAU's IACUC coordinator since 2000 and received her RLAT in 2003.

Chrystal was born in Ohio and moved to Flagstaff in 1996. She is married with a one year old daughter and has two Rottweilers (Kai and Chelly), a Red eared slider (scooter), a Veiled Chameleon (Suger), a Colorado River Toad (Bubba), and a Green Anole. She always wanted to be a fireman or policeman, but while attending NAU she visited the University Veterinarian with many sick amphibian and reptiles, she was asked if she would be interested in a position working with animals. "Dr. Van Andel (DVM) trained and quizzed me on a daily basis. He has the ability to engage, excite and inspire employees in the learning process. Roger's enthusiasm and commitment to his field guided me in my career choice." She has experience with rodent MI and regular housing and is experienced with rodent surgeries and basic cytology for diagnostics of sick animals. She feels "Husbandry and enrichment are important aspects of animal care. Animals should be healthy and happy while they are in the laboratory and proper care and enrichment can enhance animals well being."

Jeri Ellis - President Elect

Jeri is a graduate of Foothill College, Los Altos California, with an Associates in Science Veterinary Technology degree. She spent 12 years at Stanford University as an Animal Caretaker III. She went back to school and had an AHT internship at Roche Bioscience, and a Research Technician at Affymax Research Institute. She has worked primarily with monkeys, but also with a narcoleptic colony of Dobermans, rodents, reptiles, and large animals. She is familiar with most caging types as well as cage washing, sterilizers and other animal care facility equipment. She came to Arizona in December of 1997 from Stanford University and joined University Animal Care as an Animal Technologist in 2000. At University Animal Care she has worked mostly with primates, in fact she loves "monkeys, monkeys, monkeys." And she makes their environmental enrichment a high priority.

Jeri's mother worked at Stanford University and arranged for a tour for her when she was 12. Jeri started working at a pet shop as a "kennel girl," (Actual title) and later became the assistant manager. From there she went to work for Stanford as an animal caretaker and her career was launched. She received the Sig Rich Scholarship from Northern California AALAS and earned her LATg in 1992. She has been an AzAALAS branch member for five years and served as our board treasurer in 2002.

Jeri is married with a ten year old daughter and loves being a mom. She takes care of two dogs and to cats at home, is a volunteer counselor for the Crisis Pregnancy Center, and a Scrapbooking fiend. When asked, "How would you influence others to follow in your footsteps?" she said. "I tell them, if you're an animal lover. go where you are needed most. If you're concerned about animals in research, learn how you can take the very best care of them. Get trained, get AALAS certified, get the knowledge you need to give them the very best. You will know you made a difference; you walked the walk."

Past Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the 1/26/06 Board Meeting

Meeting began at 12:02 p.m. The meeting was held in the conference room of the Central Animal Facility at the University of Arizona in Tucson, St Joseph's Hospital, and W.L. Gore & Associates, Arizona State University. President Tim Martin congratulated and welcomed the

new board members and thanked everyone for making the time to participate. Tim asked for approval of the minutes of the September board meeting. Minutes were approved as written.

Treasurer Grace Aranda distributed the financial update. There is currently \$6,249 in our various accounts. This does not include some \$760 for the last board meeting conference call, awards, raffle item, and printing costs for

forms and buyers guide. Grace is still working on the raffle proceeds and will be dealing with new membership as they come in. Grace distributed new membership rosters to the board. We have 19 members and more are coming in steadily. Reminders that dues were due went out with the January newsletter distributed to all members. Reminder that board members need to have their dues paid by the end of

3rd Annual Lab Products Animal Technician Award

Lab Products, Inc. is pleased to announce the 3rd Annual Lab Products Animal Technician Awards Program. This program is intended to reward deserving animal care technicians from each of the 8 AALAS Districts and Canada with the opportunity to attend their first National AALAS Meeting. One award recipient will be selected from each of the 8 AALAS Districts and Canada. The award will be limited to animal care personnel, with at least one year of laboratory animal care experience, that have never attended a National AALAS Meeting. The recipients of the Lab Products Animal Technician Award will each receive an award recognition plaque; airfare, hotel and registration for the National AALAS Meeting; one year membership to National AALAS and \$250 to cover incidentals while attending the AALAS Meeting

For details of the award and nomination procedure email tdarby@labproductsinc.com

January to remain on the board officially.

Grace reminded everyone that our next newsletter will be in March. We will announce the award winners, new board members will be profiled, and we will need a president's message. The TBR corner needs to be submitted by TBR Cindy Madura. Each institution should submit their Tech week celebration brief. Grace will pull items from AALAS in Action and Tech Talk as usual. All items for the newsletter need to be submitted to Grace by March 3.

The Louise Brooks Memorial Raffle held at the installation event was a success. Grace is still working out the final receipts and will email out the summary.

Grace has sent out reminders to all vendor sponsors about renewing for this years Buyers Guide. To date we have already received 3 renewals. Reminders will also go out in the next newsletter on the Sponsors page.

International Tech Week will be January 29 - February 4, 2006. The branch will once again be reimbursing institutions up to \$25 for refreshments. We have mailed out pins and calendar strips, along with all requested certificates. Posters did not go out in the original shipments but Grace will be sure to get one out to Tim who requested it. The southern region has set its event for January 27 which will consist of cake and soda. Pins, certificates and calendar strips will be distributed. Past president Mike Rand will be AZAALAS acting MC along with Dr Susan Sanders, director of UAC which is once again co-sponsoring the refreshments as they will be paying for the sodas and ice. Other regions need to submit a piece on their plans for tech week to Grace to be posted on the website.

Arizona AALAS and SwAEBR have received invitations to take part in the upcoming Sally Ride Science Festival up at ASU February 25. We will have tables next to one another and need volunteers to help man the booths. We are working on ideas for activities for the girls attending: visual perception for SwAEBR and operation game for AALAS. Tim has purchased some Animal Research Saves Lives bracelets as a prize. Tim, Grace and Paula Johnson have signed up for the SwAEBR booth and Central Board Rep Jeff Williams, Donna Williams and Vendor Rep Ellen Taylor have signed up for the AZAALAS booth.

We are needing ideas for the Spring Video Conference. Mike suggested that Dr Peder Cuneo would be a good choice talking on his experiences when he was called up after the Katrina hurricane. He

was to speak on the date of the tech week event and had to be postponed. Mike will check on the reschedule date and Grace will work on getting the video conference link made (UA, UA Phx and NAU). Jeff asked about using other sites but when other sites are used it can cost upwards of \$300 to hold an hour conference. Once a date is set then we will need regional reps to arrange for refreshments. As usual the branch will reimburse for up to \$25.

SwAEBR rep April Wagner reported that SwAEBR has been in meetings with Covance to get them to come on as a new institutional member. Covance is opening a new facility in Chandler within the next couple years and will be a good source of new AALAS members as well. We will be tabling with AZAALAS at the Sally Ride Festival. The high school essay contest will be held in March with a due date of March 17 with winners getting a paid summer internship in a research lab.

Secretary Chrystal Redding and Northern Board Representative Patsy Coffin will be working together to plan this years Summer Fun Event.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Tech Week Celebrations!

On February 1, 2006, the Department of Animal Care & Technologies at Arizona State University, celebrated Tech Week.



We had a departmental BBQ at the Price Road Facility, then we gave out Technician Awards and finally we held a raffle for various items, which included, binoculars, gym bags, dinners etc. An enjoyable time was had by all. - Jeff Williams

Mile High Branch AALAS Meeting: Saturday, May 13th
ARDEC Center, Ft Collins, CO
Theme: Agricultural Animals in Biomedical Research

Keynote Speaker - Temple Grandin, "Reducing Stress Improves Both Research Results and Animal Welfare"
Dave Neil: "Biocontainment for Agricultural Animals"

Richard Bowen: "Studies in West Nile Virus"

James Owiny: "Working Safely with Large Animals" (Occupational Health and Safety Program)

Ronald McLaughlin: "AAALAC Accreditation of Agricultural Programs: Issues and Insights"

Hands-on labs

Sheep Restraint and sampling lab—Richard Bowen
Swine Restraint and sampling lab—Linda Panepinto
Cattle handling lab—Animal Science Dept., Temple Grandin oversight

Tours

Equine Reproduction Lab - Foothills Campus Tour (horses, cattle, sheep)

Division of Wildlife - The Foothills Campus Tour

For Registration Contact:
Sheryl.Carter@research.colostate.edu
or
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At W. L Gore & Associates, we had a breakfast made and served by the Study Directors including breakfast burritos, fruit, scones, and Senseo coffee's. We had a lunch of pizza and cake provided by the Facility Veterinarian and also there were gift bags from her on our desks including: Starbucks coffee, Gift Certificates to Petsmart, ceramic dog bowls & AALAS gifts. We also had a scavenger hunt put on by the Veterinarians and Surgical Research Techs that included gifts of candy, gift certificates to TCBY, novelty items, and movie tickets. We had a great time every day! - Patsy Coffin

* * *

On January 27th the Tucson branch of Arizona AALAS celebrated Technician Appreciation week with marble cake, carrot cake and soda in the Arizona Health Sciences Center. There were 40 attendees including technicians and manager from the Veterans Hospital. Pins, calendar strips and posters were handed out from National AALAS. Technician Appreciation certificates weren't presented individually as they were too numerous. Arizona membership forms were handed out and a raffle was held with a 2 night stay at the Residence Inn going to Miguel Diaz, University Animal Care. Everyone enjoyed the event! - Jane Criswell

Environmental Enrichment Strategies By Rafael P. Ubando, Bio Resources Department, Sanofi Pasteur

Simple and easy to remember general guidelines for environmental enrichment are very helpful to research, farm, and other facility situations. The acronym ENRICHMENT says it all.

Environmentally enhanced accommodations provide appropriate and comfortable space that allows social interaction for your animals.

Natural simulations provide activities similar to behavior patterns in their natural habitat, such as foraging opportunities and access to a natural environment for primates.

Record keeping—A daily written record of observations is very beneficial toward planning the next step.

Interactive opportunities—Social interaction is achieved by giving the animals the opportunity to express their normal behaviors, such as group play for dogs and rodents.

Communication flow—Keep ideas fresh. Sort out the crucial five W's (who, what, when, where, and why) and review the present and future plan.

Human touch—Social interactions between humans and animals creates a stimulating, positive environment and minimizes the potential stress associated with the realities of captive environment.

Motivational—Providing a stimulating enrichment activity such as food treats and toys after animal handling helps to condition the animal to different procedures.

Exploratory—A useful enrichment activity is one that encourages animals to explore and devote more time to "working," such as puzzle feeders.

Novelty—Create an exciting life for your animals by offering new activities and ideas.

Time bound—Specify a particular time frame for the new activity to prevent a monotonous routine for the animals.

Did You Know? Noisy Animal Rooms Can Damage Hearing

In some mechanical and cage wash rooms, the noise level may reach well over 85 decibels (dB), and the noise level in a dog room can reach up to 100 - 120 dB. Dogs, swine, and other animals may add to the amount of noise one is exposed to during the course of a work day.

So why is this important? Prolonged exposure to high levels may result in temporary or permanent hearing loss depending on the intensity and duration of exposure. One out of every three employees working in hazardous noise areas suffers from permanent hearing loss.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) established regulations regarding occupational exposure to noise by limiting the amount of time an employee may be exposed to various noise levels without the benefit of hearing protection, and requiring employers establish and administer a "continuing, effective hearing conservation program" when noise exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA) of 85 dB or more.

According to OSHA guidelines, the maximum amount of time an employee could work in the "noisy" dog room described above without the aid of hearing protection would be anywhere from 15 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the actual dB level. This does not provide very much time to complete the daily tasks normally performed in a dog room; however, by using various engineering controls or wearing protective equipment such as ear muffs or ear plugs, one may

effectively reduce the dB level to a point that would increase the permissible exposure times.

Of course, determining the actual amount of noise one is exposed to is not always a simple task; however, if you have difficulty hearing and understanding a normal conversation when in a "noisy" room, it may be a good indication that hearing protection is needed. Hearing protection, however, does not work unless an employee actually uses it when necessary.

For more information on occupational noise exposure and hearing conservation programs take a look at these following web sites:

Noise and Hearing Conservation - More Information
<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/noisehearingconservation>

Noise and Hearing Loss Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise>

(Tech Talk, Feb 2006)

New Year, New Opportunities A Word from National AALAS President Mark Suckow

As I write this, 2005 is coming to a close. The end of the year always offers an opportunity for reflection upon which challenges have been met. More importantly, though, the New Year offers the chance to look upon the possibility afforded by new opportunities, toward personal and professional growth. It is the professional dedication and growth of technicians which I encourage all to recognize during International Laboratory Animal Technician Week from January 29 to February 4, 2006.

I am hopeful that members will see AALAS as a partner in their professional growth. Our many educational programs provide opportunities to learn and prepare for certification. From our manuals to the AALAS Learning Library to our journals to ILAM to the National Meeting, opportunities to learn and grow abound! For example, the AALAS Learning Library continues to grow in terms of subscribers and content. Just recently, courses on aseptic technique for rodent survival surgery and genetically engineered mice have been added. The AALAS

periodicals, *Comparative Medicine*, *Journal of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science* (formerly *Contemporary Topics in Laboratory Animal Science*), and *Tech Talk* continue to grow in terms of manuscript submissions, readership, and stature in the scientific community. The Institute for Laboratory Animal Management (ILAM) curriculum continues to evolve and improve to better meet the needs of participants. Planning for the National Meeting to be held October 15-19, 2006 in Salt Lake City is already underway and promises to continue AALAS' tradition of having a meeting rich in scientific, technical, and management content.

The many opportunities to learn dovetail well with AALAS' strong credentialing programs. The ALAT, LAT, and LATG certifications are widely recognized as the standard of excellence in the laboratory animal science field. The Certified Manager of Animal Resources (CMAR) program continues to grow and offers individuals yet another opportunity to establish professional credentials. Hand in hand with the certification program is the AALAS Registry, a program which allows members to document that they are staying current in professional knowledge through continuing education. These programs allow certified members to clearly show a high degree of achievement and credibility.

It is also my hope that AALAS members will continue to grow through one another. Our common goal of advancing health and science through responsible animal research ties us together; but, so do the many common professional complexities and issues that we share. The old adage that there is strength in numbers is true when it comes to professional organizations, especially for those of us who often rely upon the support and consult of our colleagues. Indeed, 2006 finds us nearly 12,000 members strong—quite a professional network for us all!

The opportunities described above are only samples of the many ways AALAS hopes to help you grow in your career. It is the success and dedication of technicians which is critical to the success of humane animal research, and AALAS is excited to partner with you in 2006 and beyond.

TBR Profile

Cindy Madura is the new Tucson Branch Representative. Cindy has been a branch member for four years and this is her first AzaALAS board position. She received an A.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies and has a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science from Unity College in Maine. She had a summer internship research assistant for Audubon Society studying the habitats of common terns in Islip New York, worked two years as a Lab Technician testing drinking, ponds and lake water for bacteria and other substances, and was an animal caretaker for the humane Society in Massachusetts for a year before coming to Arizona in 1991. She applied for and was hired as an Animal Care Technician at University Animal Care at the UA in August of 2000, and has worked her way up to an Animal Technician Senior. She has worked with rodents, large animals and primates and is familiar with all associated caging and equipment along with the cage washer and autoclaves. She has passed the ALAT and LAT certification tests and plans to take the LATg in a few months.

Cindy is a bead and vintage jewelry collector and she makes jewelry and other arts and crafts. She is single, cares for a Chihuahua at home, loves travel and outdoor recreation. She always wanted to be a wildlife conservationist or ecologist and an artist (she designs and paints needlepoint canvases). She enjoys her work here with the research animals and keeping high standards in all areas of our animal care facility, especially environmental enrichment for the animals is very important to her. She says, "There is always room for improvement." She likes to influence others by saying, "Never stop learning. Read, study and get certifications to show your motivation."

**Planning a Classroom Visit?
Consult the Reach Out Toolbox!**
By Jill Worley, AALAS Community Services Coordinator

The 2005-2006 school year has already entered into its second half. Have you made an appointment to visit a local classroom within the next couple of months? AALAS and

the AALAS Foundation have many materials to help make your classroom presentation successful.

One of these is the Reach Out! Toolbox, which contains a collection of "tools" you can use to plan and present a classroom talk. The full contents are downloadable **o n l i n e** at <http://www.aalas.org/resources/toolbox.asp>. A couple of specific tools I suggest using with middle school classrooms and above are the Direct Impact Questionnaire and the Opinion Survey on the Use of Animals. Both are great for jumpstarting the kids into seriously thinking about the use of animals in research.

Many kids either have pre-formed opinions or have not really given the topic much thought, so the Direct Impact Questionnaire is a great way to introduce the kids to the many benefits they receive every day because of animal research. The questionnaire is presented in such a manner that the students see a wide variety of products and procedures they are familiar with that seemingly have no connection to biomedical research. However, when digging deeper the students discover that these are all possible and safe because of the use of animals in medical and product safety testing. Most kids are amazed to learn so many things they use or are exposed to daily are directly affected by animal research.

The Opinion Survey on the Use of Animals is another great tool for the classroom. This short survey asks for opinions on a variety of animal uses in today's society, such as keeping a pet, hunting for sport versus food, and wearing fur coats. The survey allows students and others to better put their feelings about the use of animals in perspective when comparing them to other uses of animals. This questionnaire makes a great science fair project and is also perfect for introducing the collection and presentation of data using spreadsheet software. Directions for usage are on the back side of each activity.

Whether you use these activities as part of your presentation or pass them on to the teacher to use as a classroom activity, they are great tools for introducing the use of animals in research to students. Take advantage of these and the other materials in the Reach Out!

Toolbox and schedule a classroom presentation before school lets out again in a few months!

The future of our profession and biomedical science depends on promoting the benefits of biomedical research through public outreach. Let the AALAS Foundation know how it can assist you. Email us at foundation@aalas.org. Visit us at <http://foundation.aalas.org>.

Technician Certification Tips

There is a common misconception that you must wait a full year after taking a technician certification exam before progressing to the next level. This is not so.

Each level of the Technician Certification exam has several different requirement combinations for education and work experience. Certification applicants must only meet one of the requirements at the level at which they are applying for. For example, an LAT option is that you may apply to take the LAT exam with a high school diploma, GED, or college degree and one additional year of work experience after the ALAT.

Likewise, LATG eligibility includes an option for one additional year of work experience following the LAT. These options give certified technicians an extra benefit of progressing through the exams—one a year, at a faster pace. You may apply for an exam whenever you meet any one of the requirement combinations. Simply pick the eligibility requirement that best meets your needs and submit your application for the exam. You may find a complete list of requirements for all three exam levels at www.aalas.org under Technician Certification.

(AALAS In Action, Feb 2006)

Penn Pairs Chronically Ill Patients With Medical Students to Create Better Doctors

Can someone who suffers from a lethal genetic disease teach a pair of medical students to become better doctors? That's the goal of a unique, long-term patient-student pairing program at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. Doctors-in-training -- like Christopher Guerry, a second-year medical

LIVING PROOF - Seniors

You have a special story to share. In your lifetime you have benefited from incredible medical advances. You are living proof that medical research touches us all. The Living Proof project would like to hear how advances in medical science changed your life.

In his own words - Arizonan, John Gaughan

On June 4, 1964, when I was 33 years of age, I had a Starr-Edwards Aortic mechanical valve implanted at St. Mary's Hospital in Tucson, Arizona. My surgeon was Dr. Robert Anderson.

This valve is still "click-clicking" along and has never been replaced! I am now 72 and this year was the 40th anniversary of the operation.

When I was six and eight, I had attacks of rheumatic fever which left me with a heart murmur. At 28, an attack of Sub Acute Bacterial Endocarditis almost ended my life. Penicillin saved my life.

Within the past five years I had a pacemaker implanted, two attacks of Congested Heart Failure, which brought on Pneumonia (or it could be the other way around), one TIA and Acute Anemia when I needed five pints of blood.

Why am I still alive? Medical research, dedicated doctors, nurses and the allied health professionals are the answer.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to tell my story about how medical research not only impacted, but saved my life and like a Duracell battery, is keeping me alive and well.

Share your own story online: www.Living-Proof.us

Be sure to check out the SwAEBr website too
www.swaebr.org

student at Penn -- are learning what it's like to live with cystic fibrosis (CF), and many other chronic health conditions. They're shadowing patients with chronic conditions such as HIV, asthma and kidney failure.

The students are taking part in the "Longitudinal Experience to Appreciate Patient Perspectives (LEAPP)" -- a program at Penn's medical school - in which students are paired with chronically ill patients for several years. "The goal of the program is to better understand what the patient must go through and to improve doctoring skills by learning from those experiences," explains Paul Lanken, MD, Professor of Medicine in the Pulmonary, Allergy and Critical Care Division at Penn and Director of the LEAPP program. "We want to produce better doctors... doctors who have a real compassion for what the patient is going through, including their daily struggles with a serious chronic condition."

Medical Student Paired With Patient Deb Becker... Deb Becker has battled Cystic Fibrosis (CF) - a disease characterized by thick mucus in the lungs that affects breathing and digestion -- more than half of her life. The 50-year-old grandmother first noticed the symptoms of CF at 16 and was diagnosed with it at age 25. Becker eventually lost her oldest sister, who also suffered from the disease. And throughout Becker's life, as a single parent, she has been in and out of the hospital often. But she persevered, "You put one foot in front of the other and do what you need to do."

On oxygen round the clock, Becker, a Shiloh, New Jersey resident, has limited mobility. Cystic fibrosis affects my lungs," she says. "The weather and allergies make it hard to breathe. I cough. But I still try to get out and about; I try to leave the house everyday at least to go grocery shopping." "Medical students can learn from me," Becker comments. "When it comes to medical treatment, I don't trust anybody. I question a lot. I want to know why someone's doing something. I want the young doctors to learn to respect the patient as a thinking person and make time for them."

Medical student Christopher Guerry will follow Becker's progress over the next three years. "This long-term experience can give us an

appreciation of being able to have a more in-depth relationship with a patient, similar to the way physicians used to work within communities, when they had a real and lasting relationship with their patients," said Guerry. Guerry's first visit with Becker lasted two hours. He learned about CF and the difficult aspects of the disease Becker has had to live with and overcome. "Mrs. Becker is wonderfully open and there is so much we can learn from her personality and strength. The burden of managing such an illness daily is incredible. I am struck by her optimism and humor and love of her family."

Student/Patient Pairing Leads to Patient Advocacy and Better Doctors... David Lipson, MD, Director of the Adult Cystic Fibrosis program at Penn and who is also involved in the LEAPP program, notes, "We are bringing the patient into the classroom, so to speak. It's one thing to read about a disease; it's another to interact with a patient and see how the disease affects them physically, socially, financially, and coping in general."

Douglas Holsclaw, MD, Senior Staff Physician with the Adult Cystic Fibrosis program at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center, who diagnosed Becker and has been her doctor for the last 25 years, says, "The medical students in this program get a learning experience here at Penn -- with all the resources we have and the depth of knowledge of our physicians -- that they may not get elsewhere. They get to see firsthand the doctor-patient relationship truly evolve, during which the doctor is able to continually comfort a patient, and say to them 'you remember how you made it through that surgery in the past, you were fine, you bounced back, and you'll be fine this time too.'"

Medical students in the LEAPP program are expected to meet the patient they are paired with in person, and then follow-up with them by phone or face-to-face at least every month over a three-year period. Students are also encouraged to visit their patients when they are hospitalized, during other doctor visits, and during outpatient testing. One in-home visit is required. Also, students must complete written assignments, which focus on the biopsychosocial aspects of their patient's illness.

In the first year of this experience, students primarily work to form a relationship with the patient and family. In the second and third years, students are expected to have the sufficient skills and knowledge to serve as 'health coaches' for their patients, under the supervision of the patient's physician. "We want the students to learn how a patient with a chronic health condition lives and works... how it affects not only their physical well-being but also their emotional and spiritual well-being, too," explains LEAPP Director Lanken. "We want them to understand this from the patient's point of view, not the doctor's. We want them to view their future patients first of all as persons, and learn what it's like for them to live with their particular condition and how it affects their family. Bottom line... in the long run, this will teach our Penn medical students how to be better doctors."

(Upenn, 3/3/06)

YOU ARE INVITED

Join us 4/7/06
for our Spring
Video Conference
with
Special Guest
Speaker
Dr. Peder Cuneo
"Veterinary Relief
Efforts Following
Hurricane Katrina"

For more information
including directions
and maps see the
website
www.azaalas.org

Puzzle page...if this page appears blank go to:
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