

# Dental School receives ethics award

By Beth Dunham

The USC Office of Compliance has recognized individuals from the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC with the first annual USC Ethical Leadership Award.

Given to individuals who best embody the spirit of the USC Code of Ethics and principles of the USC Compliance and Ethics Program, the award was presented to Sigmund Abelson, associate dean for clinical affairs, and Ruby Hinds, director of the Health Care Compliance Program.

Abelson and Hinds took the lead in establishing the Ostrow School of Dentistry's official health care compliance program, a comprehensive program and set of policies regarding faculty credentialing schedules, privacy, security measures, risk management and more.

The new program significantly unifies, organizes and strengthens the school's compliance efforts. The policies and standards are strongly aligned with university compliance measures, Abelson

said, and both he and Hinds expressed gratitude for the involvement of and the guidance provided by the Office of Compliance.

"Awareness of and adherence to compliance policies is an essential part of the university and part of the day-to-day operations of a health care environment," Hinds said.

The extensive program was nearly three years in the making, and Ostrow School of Dentistry staff and faculty

readily have embraced the new structure and realigned policies, Abelson said.

"As we built this program, we did it in such a way as to build support from the school community at the same time," he said. "This is a partnership."

The school also has refined its partnership with members of industry through the program, including the institution of new industry relationship

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Ben Creighton

From left: Rene Aragomaniz, assistant director of faculty provider compliance; Tammy Capretta, assistant vice president for health care compliance; Laura LaCorte, associate senior vice president for compliance; Ruby Hinds, Ostrow School of Dentistry health care compliance program director; Sigmund Abelson, Ostrow School of Dentistry associate dean for clinical affairs; Todd Dickey, senior vice president for administration; and Avishai Sadan, Dean of the Ostrow School of Dentistry.

# USC researchers discover new subtype of brain cancer

A study conducted by a collaborative team led by USC researchers may lead to better insight into the clinical outcome for some patients with a particularly aggressive type of brain cancer. The research may also provide a framework for development of targeted drug treatments.

The research by The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA), published online in the journal *Cancer Cell*, used epigenomics to determine that tumor DNA methylation profiles were distinctly different in about 10 percent of patients with glioblastoma multiforme (GBM).

"Most GBM patients survive fewer than 15 months, and fewer than 10 percent live more than five years," said Peter W. Laird of the USC Epigenome Center, who led the TCGA team in collaboration with Kenneth Aldape at M.D. Anderson

Cancer Center, Stephen B. Baylin at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and many other TCGA consortium members. "With this research, we have identified a subset of patients with a distinct type of GBM that have substantially better clinical outcomes, with a median survival time of more than three years from the time of diagnosis."

Epigenomics is the study of how DNA is packaged and marked to control which genes can be used in a particular type of cell or tissue. The distribution of one of these marks along the DNA, called DNA methylation, is often abnormal in cancer, contributing to the disease process. The characteristic epigenetic profile discovered by the TCGA team is called G-CIMP (Glioma CpG Island Methylator Phenotype) and was found to occur in much

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# Ocular prosthesis offers 'new lease on life' for patients

By Leslie Ridgeway

A special prosthesis that fits over the entire eye is bringing hope to patients suffering from corneal irregularities and severe dry eye.

The Boston Ocular Surface Prosthesis (BOS-P) is now available at the Perry Rosenthal Clinic at the Doheny Eye Institute. The prosthesis, about the size of a quarter, bathes the eye in saline solution and is thin enough that the patient can easily blink. The prostheses are custom designed and fitted to each patient, who is then trained on proper insertion and removal of the devices. The extra work is worth the trouble, patients say.

"One of our patients with dry eyes was almost forced to

quit her job," said Samuel Yiu, medical director of the clinic and cornea specialist. "Now she is enjoying her work and her life again. Most of our patients feel the prosthesis gives them a new lease on their lives."

The prosthesis, developed by Perry Rosenthal, and approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 1994, previously required patients to travel to the nonprofit Boston Foundation for Sight in Boston, Mass., to be fitted for the lens. The lens has been available since Oct. 2009 at satellite clinics established at the Doheny Eye Institute at USC, Baylor University and the Brooke Army Medical Center in Texas. The Doheny Eye Institute clinic has fitted

25 patients with the prosthesis and is working with many others from throughout the United States. The clinic is led by Yiu, John Irvine, executive director, and Gloria Chiu, chief optometrist.

The device is designed for patients with keratoconus, a degenerative disease that affects the cornea, as well as other painful and potentially blinding diseases and conditions such as post-corneal transplant astigmatism and severe dry eye. The prosthesis fits on top of the sclera, which has few nerve endings.

Preservative-free saline solution is poured into a well in the center of the prosthesis. When the prosthesis is placed correctly, the patient can see

through the saline solution. The saline solution serves as a kind of protective "bandage" on the eye.

"The scleral footing of the prosthesis, along with the ability to bathe the cornea in fluid, allows a tremendous amount of improvement in selected patients' vision, comfort and quality of life," said Irvine. "Recognition of its potential for patient comfort and rehabilitation is growing. More physicians are weighing in on the device, which allows for positive feedback for further development."

After being fitted for and trained to use the prosthesis, patients return to the clinic

for regular lens maintenance. Cost for the prosthesis is in the \$7,000 range for patients without insurance. Irvine and Yiu are working to find a way to offer financial assistance to qualified patients, once funding becomes available.

Doheny Eye Institute's David Huang is exploring new applications of a technology called optical coherence tomography that may speed up production and decrease costs of the device.

For information on the BOS-P, or to make an appointment, call (323) 442-6337, or visit the Doheny Eye Institute website at [www.doheny.org](http://www.doheny.org).

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reporting guidelines for faculty, the use of the RepTrax program in order to keep track of visiting industry partners and other measures that make productive, appropriate relationships with industry easier.

Hinds said that the new structure and the openness of the whole process have made adhering to compliance policies, as well as reporting any concerns or problems, simpler for staff and faculty members.

"We aim to be very inclusive and accessible for any of our community members who have questions about the program," she said.

Avishai Sadan, dean of the

Ostrow School of Dentistry, praised Abelson and Hinds' leadership in implementing the new program throughout the school.

"In the ever-changing world of regulations which govern institutions such as USC, the Ostrow School of Dentistry has been able to adapt to new guidelines and new technologies while maintaining an environment that encourages productive, professional relationships with patients, students, visitors and industry partners," Sadan said. "This environment fosters research growth, improves education, enhances patient care and helps us to better fulfill our mission."

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