NEW NETHERCUTT EMERGENCY CENTER,
HOSPITAL ON THE HORIZON
This is a time of milestones for Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center. Last year, we celebrated our 10th anniversary as an integral part of the UCLA Hospital System. This year, we will reach an even greater milestone — our 80th anniversary as a hospital dedicated to serving the health-care needs of the Westside community and beyond. Please circle October 15 on your calendars. That’s when we will celebrate this special occasion by hosting a festival right outside our existing medical center on 16th Street. The event will feature an afternoon of fun-filled activities for the entire family, including musical entertainment, refreshments, health screenings, prizes and souvenirs.

We hope that you can join us to take a look back — and a look ahead — with a sneak preview of our new Nethercut Emergency Center, currently taking shape on 15th Street near Arizona Avenue. This state-of-the-art facility will enable us to better serve the almost 30,000 people who seek emergency care at Santa Monica-UCLA each year (see story on page 8).

A SPECIAL PLACE FOR SPECIAL CHILDREN

Were you born at the original Santa Monica Hospital in 1926 or 1927? We’re Seeking Santa Monica Babes From 1926-27

Were you born at the original Santa Monica Hospital in 1926 or 1927? If so, we want you to be part of our 80th Anniversary Celebration. Please call (800) 516-5323 to give us your contact information.

Later this year, we will mark another milestone when we change our name to reflect our strategic alliance with Orthopaedic Hospital. Although the new Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center and Orthopaedic Hospital will not be completed for a while, Orthopaedic Hospital has already relocated its surgical services to our campus. We know this partnership will benefit our community and the greater Southern California area, for decades to come.

Eighty years young and still growing. The best is yet to come! See for yourself at our “80th-Anniversary Celebration” on October 15.

Posie Carpenter, RN, MSN, MPH
Chief Administrative Officer

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A new X-Stop implant puts a halt to pain

After 2 1/2 years of suffering with painful spinal stenosis, Molly Taguchi was losing hope. She had undergone various treatments, including epidural-like injections, but the pain in her legs and buttocks always returned.

Then Dr. Arya “Nick” Shamie, a spine surgeon at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center and assistant professor of orthopaedic surgery and neurosurgery at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, entered the picture.

Taguchi, 61, of Los Angeles, had been set to undergo a traditional laminectomy, in which portions of the vertebrae are removed to eliminate pressure on the constricted spinal cord and nerves. However, just in the nick of time, the FDA approved a new medical device called the X-Stop Interspinous Process Decompression System.

Fortunately for Taguchi, her physician, Dr. Shamie, had inserted the device in more than a dozen patients while a resident at St. Mary’s Medical Center in San Francisco, where he trained. He knew that FDA approval was close, and recommended the procedure for Taguchi — an insurance collector for UCLA Healthcare — shortly after the device received the go-ahead by the agency.

Taguchi’s procedure on Jan. 19 was a landmark of sorts. It was the first one in the U.S. performed outside of St. Mary’s since FDA approval in November 2005. Dr. Shamie is one of only a handful of orthopaedists nationwide with experience implanting the device.

“I don’t routinely get excited about new technology, but this is so superior to what we’ve been using,” Dr. Shamie said. “I’d been asking Dr. Zucherman about its availability, and when the device was approved, I was one of the first surgeons in the U.S. to train with it.”

The spine encloses the spinal canal, which contains a cylinder of nerve tissues called the “cauda equine” — the spinal nerves. Normally, there is space between the spinal nerves and the interior wall of the spinal canal so that nerves are not pinched. However, as a person ages, the ligaments and bone that surround the spinal canal can thicken, causing spinal stenosis — a narrowing of the spinal canal. The spinal cord and nerve fibers that exit the spinal canal become crowded and pinched due to this narrowing.

The X-Stop acts as a spacer that separates the spinous processes, portions of the vertebrae characterized by bumps that run along the spine. Spacing the spinous processes eliminates nerve crowding, releasing pressure on the spinal canal.

According to Dr. Shamie, X-Stop implantation is generally performed under local anesthesia in under an hour. The risk from general anesthesia is eliminated, trauma is minimized, hospitalization and recovery time are reduced, and patients generally return to work faster than they do following a laminectomy.

Taguchi returned home the day after surgery. Almost immediately, the pain she had been experiencing was gone.

“I was pleasantly amazed,” Dr. Shamie said. “I knew this was a good procedure, but I was still surprised by how quickly her pain was gone.”

Taguchi agrees. “I can walk normally, drive my car and do everything I used to do,” she said. “I’m 100-percent improved. I’d recommend this to anyone.”

For a free, confidential referral to a physician at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center, call (800) 825-2631.
For Laurel Terreri, music really is “the healing force of the world,” as the song says. Terreri is a board-certified music therapist — one of only a few hundred in California and perhaps several thousand nationwide, based on figures from the American Music Therapy Association and the Certification Board for Music Therapists.

Music therapists are health professionals who have completed education and training in music therapy from one of more than 70 accredited college and university programs across the country. Once certified to practice professionally, they use music to address the physical, emotional, cognitive and/or social needs of people of all ages. In hospitals or other clinical settings, music-therapy interventions can help patients to better manage pain and stress, express feelings, improve communication with caregivers and recover more quickly from injuries or illnesses.

Terreri has been a music therapist for the past 10 years. Initially, she worked with cerebral palsy and spina bifida patients at a New Jersey Hospital. She came to Orthopaedic Hospital about five years ago, as its music therapist and activities coordinator. With the recent transition of Orthopaedic’s surgical services to Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center, she has begun working with patients in Santa Monica as well.

Twice weekly, Terreri makes rounds at Santa Monica-UCLA with guitar and music sheets in tow. She works primarily with children in the hospital’s Pediatrics Unit, but also visits patients in Geriatrics and the Palliative Care Unit. Her therapy can range from simply playing music that helps patients relax to “singing and songwriting with children and adults to give them some control of their situations and an avenue for creativity.” For longer-term patients, she sometimes begins guitar and piano lessons with them. Terreri proudly recalls a 9-year-old patient who she tutored on playing the guitar during his hospital stay. After his discharge, the boy’s mother bought him a guitar and he now takes lessons.

On a recent afternoon at the medical center, Terreri’s musical talents and vocal range were readily apparent. First, she played an instrumental piece to support a 16-year-old from Mexico, who expressed his appreciation by drawing a picture for her. Then she coaxed an eight-year-old patient to sing along with her as she played contemporary songs from Green Day and Three Doors Down. Finally, she played and sang a classic Beatles tune requested by an adult patient.

Music therapist Laurel Terreri works with patient Jose Rodriguez in Pediatrics.
CONSTRUCTION UPDATE:
NEW NETHERCUT ER TO OPEN FIRST

Project officials now expect that construction of the new Nethercutt Emergency Center at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center will be completed in late 2006, with move-in targeted for early 2007.

The 14,000-square-foot facility in the new Southwest Wing will contain several innovative features to enable Santa Monica-UCLA to better serve the almost 30,000 patients a year who seek emergency care at the hospital.

Dr. Wally Ghurabi, medical director of the Emergency Center, says that first and foremost among the innovations is an on-site CT Scanner that will improve service by minimizing patient transport and enabling more timely and accurate diagnosis of various ailments, such as stroke, chest pain and breathing disorders.

Dr. Ghurabi says the new facility also will allow for more efficient and compassionate care, thanks to its updated design featuring a centralized work station, an observation unit where patients can be continuously monitored before being admitted to the hospital or discharged home and exam rooms that offer better privacy and greater versatility for diagnosis and treatment.

“One of the biggest complaints about emergency centers in general is the long waits while more seriously ill patients are taken care of first,” he adds. “In our new ER, we will have the capability of providing fast-track service to patients with minor injuries and illnesses.”

When the new Emergency Center opens, it will trigger a series of events that will be instrumental to completion of the new Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center and Orthopaedic Hospital.

First, the existing ER facility will be demolished. Then, construction will begin on the Central Wing, which will connect all of the buildings that comprise the new medical campus. The Central Wing will feature a new main entrance containing an airport-style drop-off zone for improved hospital access.

This phase of construction will require the closure of the current main entrance on 16th Street for approximately 18 months. During the closure, the main entrance will shift to 15th Street.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the Southwest Wing, which will house a new Birthing Center, Neonatal Intensive-Care Unit, Recovery Room and inpatients units, is scheduled for completion in mid-2007. A new, state-of-the-art Laboratory will open with the Emergency Center and be located on the building’s basement level.