

CAFA/CESASC Joint Event on Nov. 17, 2007 at the City of Hope

On Saturday, November 17, the Chinese American Faculty Association of Southern California (**CAFA**) and the Chinese-American Engineers and Scientists Association of Southern California (**CESASC**) held a joint event at **City of Hope**. The event began with a tour of the campus consisting of both a National Medical Center as well as the Beckman Research Institute, a lunch social and three presentations on the most recent information on breast cancer, urologic surgery at City of Hope, and brain cancer by three Chinese clinicians at City of Hope. Dr. **Shiuan Chen**, Director of the Department of Surgical Research at City of Hope, gave the opening remarks to welcome everyone. Approximately fifty people were in attendance. This event gave an opportunity for meeting and networking with new people from various locations in Southern California.

The first of the three lectures was given by **Cathie Chung**, M.D., Ph.D.. Dr. Chung is currently a clinician and researcher in the breast oncology section of the Division of Medical Oncology and Experimental Therapeutics. Dr. Chung focuses on clinical trial development and enhancing the cancer-specific database, as well as develops new therapies to treat women with early and late stage breast cancer. Dr. Chung obtained her Ph.D. at the University of Illinois and researched infectious diseases at the National Institutes of Health. She earned her medical degree at the George Washington University School of Medicine and completed her residency in internal medicine at the University of California San Francisco. She performed her postdoctoral fellowship in medical oncology at Stanford University.

Dr. Cathie Chung gave an informative and easy-to-understand lecture on Breast Cancer among Chinese Americans. She discussed the rise of breast cancer in Asian women, but specifically in Chinese women. Possible explanations for the increased risk in these women were discussed, including adopting a Western diet and a lack of exercise after immigrating to the US. Factors which can decrease the risk for developing breast cancer were also mentioned. These included factors which we have full control over such as diet, more exercise, the number of children a woman has and the earlier a woman has a live birth. Chemoprevention was also discussed as a way to possibly prevent cancer. Currently, Dr. Shiuan Chen is conducting studies with grape seed extract and white button mushroom extract to

determine whether they can act against breast and prostate cancer, respectively. In addition, a basic background of the biology of breast cancer was given. Importantly, breast cancer studies have delineated several types of breast cancer depending on the presence of the estrogen receptor and whether the HER2/neu receptor is overexpressed. As studies increase our knowledge of breast cancer and the different types of these cancers, treatment options may be administered to target these specific types of cancers. Dr. Chung stressed the need for more patient participation in clinical trials ongoing at City of Hope.

The second talk regarding the advances on urologic surgery at City of Hope was given by **Kevin Chan**, M.D.. Dr. K. Chan joined City of Hope Cancer Center's Department of Urology and Urologic Oncology in 2004. He has become part of a distinguished team of doctors known for their use of the minimally invasive robotic laparoscopic surgical technique to remove cancerous prostate glands. Dr. K. Chan earned his medical degree at the University of Southern California School of Medicine and completed his urology residency at the Los Angeles County+University of Southern California Medical Center. At City of Hope, he works with all aspects of general urology, and focuses on urinary incontinence, sexual dysfunction, endourology and urinary reconstruction.

Dr. K. Chan gave an interesting and informative talk on laparoscopic surgery at City of Hope. He shared videos on various different kinds of surgeries using the *da Vinci* robot, including surgeries involving the prostate and small intestine. This robot is highly useful and beneficial to patients. Unlike traditional open surgeries, this type of surgical method is minimally invasive and only requires a few incisions in the chest into which the robotic arms are inserted. One of the robotic arms holds a small camera and the three-dimensional image is viewed by the surgeon who has control over the other arms. The movements that are performed by the robot reproduce the exact movements of the surgeon. The benefits of the robotic surgery are that it can perform more precise procedures than if a human was performing them. For the patient, there is less pain, less blood loss, fewer side effects, shorter hospitalization time and a faster recovery. According to Dr. K. Chan, more medical students are being trained to perform laparoscopic surgeries rather than conventional open surgeries. In addition, Dr. K. Chan noted that learning how to perform each of the surgeries by the robot varies, depending on the type of surgery. While some are relatively easy to learn, others are not depending on the intricacy of the surgery.

Lastly, **Michael Chen**, M.D., Ph.D, discussed the latest in Brain Cancer. Dr. M. Chen joined City of Hope in 2007 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Neurosurgery. He obtained his medical degree at Thomas Jefferson University and completed his internship at Johns Hopkins University. He also worked at the National Institutes of Health under a research fellowship and completed his Neurosurgery residency and doctorate degree at Medical College of Virginia. At City of Hope Dr. M. Chen is the Section Head of the Malignant Brain Tumor Program. The Brain Tumor Program is a comprehensive neuro-oncology program which integrates the expertise of many neurosurgeons, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, neurologists, and basic scientists and offers patients a wide range of treatment options, including conventional as well as experimental treatment strategies to meet their individual needs.

Dr. M. Chen gave an overview of the different types of brain cancers and how they may originate either from brain tissue itself or cancers from other organs which have metastasized to the brain. He also introduced some signaling pathways and the basic biology of how cancers may initially develop. While the *da Vinci* Surgical System demonstrated by Dr. K. Chan is not FDA approved for brain surgery usage, physicians at City of Hope are currently trying to develop this application for this use. Currently, the modes of therapy that are available include radiation, chemotherapy, and surgery. Dr. M. Chen also talked about some exciting potential therapies that are in clinical trials for treating brain cancers.

This seminar on these various different cancers was quite informative. It provided people in the audience a general overview of the different types of cancers and up-to-date information on what physicians and researchers know about these cancers, how to treat these cancers and what promising therapies may be used in the future to treat these cancers. People in the audience were encouraged to ask questions and get the latest information from the experts in a friendly, intimate atmosphere. Many expressed that the meeting went very well, they enjoyed it and felt that another meeting like this should be held again.

*Prepared by **Cynthia Wong**, a graduate student of the **City of Hope***