Giuliani, Thornburgh Help Dedicate Waldman Room

By E.J. Borghetti

Together they orchestrated a major revitalization of Pitt athletics that resulted in nationally ranked programs and state-of-the-art facilities. That team re-formed Friday when Pitt Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg announced the return of Steve Pederson as the University’s athletic director.

Pederson, who Nordenberg called a “source of inspiration to Pitt students and faculty,” is a Pitt trustee and former U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania who also served as U.S. Attorney General in the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations. The University has been the official repository for Thornburgh’s papers since 1998 and has hosted the Thornburgh Family Lecture Series on Disability Law and Policy since 2003.

During his initial Pitt tenure, Pederson departed Pitt in December 2002 to become athletic director at his “Comeback U.” Together with Pitt’s great coaches and staff, and I’m anxious to get to know our student-athletes. My wife, Tami, and I are also excited to renew acquaintances with our great Pitt fans and welcome many new fans to the Panther family.”

“Steve was the person who originally convinced me to come to the University of Pittsburgh in 1999,” Pitt men’s basketball coach Jamie Dixon said. “He has continued to be a tremendous friend and a person I have regularly sought out for advice and direction over the years. I am incredibly excited that Steve and his family are returning to our University. Everyone in our department is going to benefit from his leadership.”

During his initial Pitt tenure, Pederson hired six Big East Conference Coach-of-the-Year honorees (football, men’s and women’s basketball, baseball, field hockey, and volleyball), an unprecedented achievement by a Big East athletic director.

Pederson Returns to Lead University’s Athletic Department

“I am grateful to Chancellor Nordenberg for the opportunity to again be part of this great University, city, and region.”

—Steve Pederson

Pederson departed Pitt in December 2002 to become athletic director at his alma mater, the University of Nebraska. He returns to Pittsburgh nearly 11 years to the day of his initial Pitt appointment by Nordenberg.

“Steve Pederson is one of our country’s most talented and accomplished athletic directors, and I am very pleased that he is returning to Pitt. I am grateful to Chancellor Nordenberg for the opportunity to again be part of this great University, city, and region,” Pederson said. “Leaving here five years ago was the hardest professional decision of my life. Coming back was the easiest. As great as the past has been at Pitt, the future is even brighter. I am thrilled to be able to work with Pitt’s great coaches and staff, and I’m anxious to get to know our student-athletes. My wife, Tami, and I are also excited to renew acquaintances with our great Pitt fans and welcome many new fans to the Panther family.”

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A Pittsburgh native and alumnus of Taylor Allderdice High School in the city’s Squirrel Hill neighborhood, Waldman, who died in 2003 at the age of 58, was a graduate of Yale University and the University of Pennsylvania Law School. In 1971, he served as assistant U.S. attorney under Thornburgh, then followed him to a post at the U.S. Justice Department in Washington, D.C., under President Ford.

After managing Thornburgh’s successful Pennsylvania gubernatorial campaign in 1978, Waldman went to Harrisburg as one of the new governor’s “Five Musketeers”—his inner circle of close advisers.

As executive assistant and general counsel to Thornburgh, Waldman became famous for his willingness to take the heat when the governor made difficult political decisions. The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin called him “the power behind the throne,” while the Philadelphia Inquirer called him Pennsylvania’s “shadow governor.”

In 1988, Waldman was appointed a U.S. district court judge and began serving on the federal bench in Philadelphia. He was nominated by President George W. Bush to the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in 2003, but died of lung cancer while waiting to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

Thornburgh loved his life “at the intersection of law, politics, and intellectualism,” Specter said. “What a fitting tribute that he should be honored with a seminar room where people can think about those things and try to emulate his achievements.”

Giuliani said he met Waldman in 1975, when both were federal prosecutors—one in New York, the other in Pittsburgh. The two bonded over their common love of the law—and cigars, he said. In later years, Giuliani came to depend on Waldman’s reliable, no-nonsense personal and profes-
Briefly Noted

Pitt to Offer Holiday Dinner To Needy and Homeless Dec. 25

Pitt’s Marketplace will host the Second Annual Salvation Army Christmas Dinner for the homeless and needy on Dec. 25.

The event marks the second year that the Pitt Volunteer Pool and the Salvation Army have organized the free dinner. About 400 adults and children are expected the year, said Gwen Watkins, a special events coordinator with the University’s Office of Community and Government Relations. The event is also open to University students who are unable to return home for the holidays, she said.

Dinner will be served in the lower level of the Student Union from approximately 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. Senta will make an appearance to give presents to the children, and Mrs. Claus will read stories.

Everyone attending will receive a gift bag, which will include a hat-and-glove set.

Watkins said donations of new hat-and-glove sets—for children or for adults—can be delivered to Pitt’s Volunteers’ Pool by Oct. 12.

The Pitt Volunteer Pool was formed in 1991 by Pitt staff and faculty who were interested in volunteering for local nonprofit organizations. The past year, 2,500 faculty and staff who work primarily in teams on more than 100 community projects.

—Jane-Ellen Robinet

Sala Udin to Discuss Race, Poverty, and Sprawl Issues

Sala Udin, president and CEO of the Core Center for Civic Leadership in Pittsburgh and a former Pittsburgh City Council member, will deliver a lecture today on social problems associated with urban decline.

The lecture, from noon to 1:30 p.m., will be held at Pitt’s Center on Race and Social Problem (CRSP), 2017 Cathedral of Learning. CRSP is part of Pitt’s School of Social Work.

The talk, which is free and open to the public, is part of the Buchanan Imaginarium & Robin Hood Fall 2007 Speaker Series. Lunch will be provided, and registration is not required.

Udin’s lecture, titled “Challenges of Race, Poverty, and Sprawl,” will examine what he calls “profound demographic changes over the past 50 years in the population and resources of the urban core.” He said that underrepresented people are isolated in, prevented from economic opportunities, and have lower quality education.

Meanwhile, he said, the quality of life exists in the urban core continues to deteriorate. “The long-term viability of the region is inextricably bound to the viability of the urban core in which it is centered,” Udin says. “If the heart fails, the body dies.”

During his 11 years on Pittsburgh City Council, Udin became known as a voice for the poor and underrepresented. His 1985’s contracting of a disparity study, which resulted in an uncompensated number of underrepresented groups obtaining jobs or construction contracts for the demolition of Three Rivers Stadium and the construction of PNC Park and Heinz Field. Udin served as chair of city council’s finance and budget committee for three successive two-year terms.

Core is a national nonprofit organization that seeks to strengthen the democratic process by preparing individuals for effective and ethical leadership in the public sector. It has operations in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Cleveland.

For more information about today’s lecture, call 412-624-7102. —Sharon S. Blake

Director of Smart-Growth Partnership At UPG Elected President of Pa. Planning Association

Alexandra J. Graciano was elected to a two-year term as president of the Pennsylvania Planning Association (PPA).

Graciano is executive director of the Smart-Growth Partnership of Westmoreland County, which is based at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg. Founded in 2001, the center works to support meaningful economic growth that also improves residents’ quality of life.

PPA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization for professional planners and planning officials, as well as other organizations and individuals interested in planning. It is a chapter of the national American Planning Association.

Graciano previously served two terms as vice president and one term as treasurer of PPA. In 2004, Gov. Ed Rendell appointed him to serve a four-year term on the Recast Advisory Council. Graciano received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Westmount College and his Master of Public Policy and Management degree from the University of Pittsburgh.

—Wendy Muckall

UPB Names Director for Business Resource Center

Ann R. Robinson was named director of the Business Resource Center at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, effective Oct. 1.

The center helps entrepreneurs begin or expand a business by assisting in the writing of business plans, identifying financial help and training programs, and analyzing finances and products.

“The Business Resource Center is an integral part of Pitt-Bradford, and Ann Robinson has played a key role in making it a success,” said Bridget Pouzar, UPB director of auxiliary services, who oversees the resource center.

Robinson said the center addresses clients’ needs and points them to the appropriate small business resources available. “It’s all about collaboration and regional partnership,” she said.

Robinson is also responsible for the administration of the WorkNet Bradford, Pennsylvania’s Guaranteed Free Training Program. She assists regional manufacturing and technology-based businesses in applying for and receiving grant funds for job training. In the fiscal year, Pitt-Bradford and the Business Resource Center, as a WEDnetPA Partner, will help to bring in more than $530,000 in training dollars to the region.

Robinson, who has been with the center since 2002, was named director prior to being appointed. Previously, she served as a field executive for the Keystone Tree Line Get Set Council for 10 years and owned Ready, Set, Grow child development center for five years.

—Kimberly Marcelt Weinberg

Education, History Dept. Team Up for Joint Degree

New master’s combines graduate study in history with certification in secondary education

By Patricia Lomando White

Pitt’s School of Education and the Department of History in the School of Arts and Sciences have joined to offer the Master of Arts in History Education (MAHE) degree, a new degree that combines graduate study in history with professional training and certification in secondary social studies education.

According to David Berman, education professor and coordinator of the Social Studies Education Program in the School of Education, the idea for the MAHE is to better prepare history and social studies teachers to begin their careers on a solid intellectual and pedagogical footing, adjust to changing curricular demands, and remain engaged in their profession.

The history department and education’s Social Studies Education Program developed the new degree program.

“As envisioned, the MAHE offers future teachers the opportunity to conduct graduate study in history to learn the craft of the historian, and to develop professional relations with faculty and peers,” said William Chase, Pitt professor of history. “Graduates not only earn their certification, but also get to experience the rigors of doing discipline-based training.”

The two-year program requires students to take graduate-level history courses during the first year and courses in the School of Education’s Master of Arts in Teaching and Professional Year programs in the second year.

Program graduates will acquire the history expertise required for the Master of Arts in history. They will also earn the Instruction I certification in secondary social studies education that is required to teach history and social studies in Pennsylvania public schools.

In addition to the academic coursework needed to fulfill the MAHE degree requirements, students must pass the PRAXIS I General Knowledge test to be admitted to the program. They must also take the PRAXIS II Content Knowledge test, generally taken during the second summer of the program, to obtain the Internship Certification required for the internship field experience in the schools.

The MAHE provides stipends from participating school districts for their internship experiences upon receipt of the Internship Certificate. During the second year of the program, students will serve an internship field experience in a local school district from September through June of the public school year.

Applications for admission to the MAHE can be completed on-line at the department’s Web site at www.pitt.edu/~pitthist/graduate/ and on the School of Education Web site at www.education.pitt.edu. The deadline for applications for the first year of the program is Jan. 15, 2008.

CORRECTION

In the story “52 Weeks and Counting: Jazz Week Capped With Sold-Out Concert” (Pitt Chronicle, Nov. 12), the name of jazz musician Joe Blandino was misspelled.
Pederson Returns to Pitt

In 1999, he charged an unknown coach from Northern Arizona University with the task of resurrecting the Panthers’ struggling men’s basketball program. That coach, Ben Howland, would build Pitt into a Big East power and was named the consensus National Coach of the Year in 2002. Pitt, which had not been to the NCAA Tournament in nine years, advanced to the “Sweet 16” in 2002 after posting a school-record 29 victories. The following season, Pitt would reach No. 2 in the polls, capture its first Big East Tournament championship, and again advance to the NCAA regional semifinals.

Since that time, Pitt basketball has become one of the nation’s most consistent winners, advancing to six consecutive NCAA tournaments from 2002 to 2007. Pitt football was revitalized under Pederson’s watch. Upon his arrival, the Panthers were coming off seven consecutive seasons without a bowl. By the end of his tenure, Pitt earned four bowl berths in six years, including back-to-back postseason wins in 2001 and 2002.

The ’02 team finished 9–4, the program’s best mark in 20 years, and ranked No. 18 in the final polls. Pitt enjoyed tremendous achievements in athletics under Pederson. In NCAA Division I men’s basketball, Pitt ranked among the nation’s top five schools in attendance increase for two consecutive years (2001-02 and 2002-03). The 2002-03 basketball season—the inaugural campaign in the 12,508-seat Petersen Events Center—was sold out.

In football, Pederson formed a marketing and ticket-pricing plan that resulted in record attendance for the 2003 season. Season tickets were sold out for the ’03 campaign as the Panthers averaged an all-time record 59,197 fans for their home season, surpassing the previous mark of 54,818 set in 1982.

Pederson’s tenure witnessed a major strengthening of Pitt’s athletic infrastructure. With Nordenberg, he helped shape the vision of the Petersen Events Center, the state-of-the-art convocation center that dramatically revolutionized Pitt’s campus upon its opening in 2002. The Petersen Center is widely considered one of the finest college basketball venues in the country, and it also has been a major asset for student life, providing outstanding recreational facilities and an impressive venue for graduation ceremonies.

Pederson was at the forefront of the football program’s move into the UPMC Sports Performance Complex, which included the forging of a unique relationship between UPMC, a professional sports franchise, and college athletic program. Pittsburgh basketball gained a sparkling new home in Heinz Field under Pederson’s watch in 2001. The Panthers created a prominent presence at the new stadium with their logos and the team’s history visible on the field.

Pitt football field underwent a major renovation in 1998-99, providing Pitt’s Olympic sports programs with new locker and training facilities. Trees Field also underwent major upgrades to accommodate both baseball and Pitt’s new softball program.

Pederson and his wife have three children: Mark, Kari, and Kristin.

Athletics Honors Baierl With First Alumni Game

By Greg Hutchins

Pitt basketball stars of the past have paid tribute to one of the most generous and enthusiastic contributors to the University’s athletics programs.

The inaugural Bill Baierl Alumni Game was held Nov. 4 at the Petersen Events Center in honor of the former basketball letterman and dedicated long-time supporter of the Pitt athletics program.

David R. Baierl, who during a five-decade career in business turned a single car dealership into a $200 million chain of automobile businesses, died April 14, 2007. He was 78.

Baierl (EDUC ’51) provided the lead gift for the construction of the Petersen Center’s 43,000-square foot Baierl Student Recreation Center and the Baierl Basketball Center, which houses Pitt’s locker rooms, team meeting rooms, and training and practice facilities.

Festivities at the event included an autograph signing session during halftime of the women’s game, a video tribute celebrating Baierl’s life, and a 30-minute alumni game.

The video tribute featured interviews with Pitt women’s basketball coach Agnus Berenato, Pitt men’s basketball coach Jamie Dixon, and Pitt Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg.

Baierl’s wife, Carole, and cousin, Lee, both spoke to the audience. A moment of silence in Baierl’s honor also was observed.

Then a group of Pitt alumni—divided into Blue and Gold squads—battled for the first alumni game title in a closely contested game, with the Blue defeating the Golds, 51-48.

The Golds battled back from a large halftime deficit. After the Golds’ Darren Morningstar (CAS ’88) hit one of two free throws to cut the Blues’ lead to 49-48, the Blues’ Bobby Martin (CAS ’91) was fouled. Martin hit both of his free throw attempts, and the Golds trailed by three points with 10 seconds remaining.

On the next possession, the Golds’ Antonio Graves (CAS ’97) hit a 3-pointer, but the points were disallowed because Gold coaches Barry Rohrseen, Curtis Aiken, (CGS ’87) and Sam Clancy had inadvertently called a timeout before the shot.

Clancy was a basketball standout for Pitt until 1981, when he left to pursue a career in the National Basketball Association. He returned to Pitt in 2006 to complete his degree. Rohrseen, now head men’s basketball coach at Manhattan College, was a Pitt assistant coach and associate head coach.

With four seconds left, the Golds had an opportunity to score but missed several shots—including one blocked by Charles Smith (CAS ’88)—to give the Blues its 51-48 win.

Smith, Big East Rookie of the Year in 1984-85, Big East Player of the Year in 1988, Pitt’s leading all-time scorer, and 1988 Olympic bronze medalist, was one of many former Pitt basketball standouts who participated.

University of Memphis men’s basketball coach John Calipari also attended. Calipari is a former Pitt assistant men’s basketball coach.

For more information, visit: pittsburghpanthers.cstv.com

Medical Mission

Two Pitt faculty traveled with Project Africa Global Inc. (PAG) to Mwanza, Switzerland, this summer to present an oral health education program to Regional Fikra Memorial Hospital. The program—the first of its kind at the hospital—was donated by Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC.

Shown with hospital staff are, second from left, Condessa Curley-Haley (CAS ’76), chief executive officer of PAG, and center, Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew, a professor in the Pitt Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproduction in Pitt’s School of Medicine and director of the department’s Global Health Program. Not shown is Larkins-Pettigrew’s cousin, Lee Baierl, assistant dean of student affairs and director of diversity programs in Pitt’s School of Medicine.

Based in Los Angeles and maintaining an office in the Pittsburgh area, PAG is a nonprofit organization that links health care resources in the United States with the developing countries of Africa. As part of their work with PAG, Pettigrew and Larkins-Pettigrew have traveled to Africa for the past three years to treat patients, present a medical conference, and teach health care about the prevention of HIV/AIDS.
Science & Technology

Pitt Cardiologists Identify New Gene Responsible for Sudden Cardiac Arrest

By Maureen McGaffin

Researchers in Pitt’s School of Medicine have identified a new gene responsible for a rare, inherited form of sudden cardiac arrest known as Brugada syndrome.

The team hopes identification of this new gene will shed light on more common causes of heart attacks and heart failure, and will help the development of new, effective therapeutic treatments that will prevent all types of fatal arrhythmias.

The study was led by Barry London, the Harry S. Tack professor of medicine, chief of the division of cardiology in Pitt’s School of Medicine, and director of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) Cardiovascular Institute.

Their findings were reported in the Nov. 12 issue of Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association. The paper is online and available by going to circ.ahajournals.org.

Brugada syndrome is a rare inherited arrhythmia, more commonly found in men. It can be discovered when the patient has an electrocardiogram (ECG) after reporting unexplained fainting spells.

In about 20 percent of Brugada syndrome patients, mutations in the heart’s sodium channels lead to less current sodium flow and shorter heartbeats in part of the heart. That puts patients at risk for rapid, abnormal heart rhythms. Without warning, a seemingly healthy patient can pass out or suffer a sudden cardiac arrest from an arrhythmia.

Arrhythmias remain a major public health problem leading to more than 250,000 sudden cardiac deaths each year. Brugada syndrome was only identified approximately 15 years ago and much is still not understood about the condition, London said. It is found all over the world and presently there is no cure.

The best therapy to date is to implant a defibrillator into the chest of patients who are clinically found to be at high risk.

Using positional cloning and gene sequencing on a family affected with Brugada syndrome, London and colleagues identified a mutation in a previously unstudied gene, GPD1-L, on chromosome 3p24. This mutation impairs the heart’s natural electrical ability to beat in a coordinated manner and maintain a stable rhythm, he said.

Patients with Brugada syndrome rarely have symptoms. London said, though they carry the genetic mutation all the time. “So, the question now is, why do arrhythmias or sudden death happen on any one particular day?” he said. “Something else is happening concurrently with this mutation to trigger the potentially lethal rhythm problems.”

With the identification of the GPD1-L gene, London’s team hopes to discover additional genes that control the heart’s rhythms and increase their understanding of the mechanisms that lead to arrhythmias in Brugada syndrome patients and others.

London’s collaborators include Michael Michalce, Haidar Mehd, Xiadong Zhi, Laurie Kerchner, Prakash C. Viswanathan, Mohan Madhusudanan, Catherine Baty, Stephen Lagana, Ryan Aleong, Rebecca Gutmann, and Dennis McNamara, all from the University of Pittsburgh Cardiovascular Institute; along with researchers from the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Ohio State University, Emory University, and the Atlanta VA Medical Center.

His study was funded in part by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs grant and the American Heart Association Established Investigator Awards.

NSF Grant Aids Study of Power Plant Pollution

By Morgan Kelly

The planet could breathe easier if new research now under way in Pitt’s chemistry department proves fruitful. Professors Lawrence Friedman and Toby Chapman are working with several students to develop polymers that capture carbon dioxide emissions from coal-burning power plants so they can be disposed of in an environmentally friendly way.

They are synthesizing the polymers in collaboration with David Luebke of the National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL), who will test the polymers’ effectiveness.

The project is supported by a Discovery Corps Senior Fellowship, which Friedman received from the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Division of Chemistry and the Office of Multidisciplinary Activities for the 2007-08 academic year.

Though in its early stages, the project builds on previous work involving unique polymers (large molecules made of smaller molecules) that are able to capture carbon dioxide from flue gases, are stable to flue gas components, and are inexpensive to prepare in large quantities.

Although the concept of carbon-capturing materials is not new, this research is novel in that it uses specifically designed polymers to capture carbon dioxide and has immediate application as a potential solution for uncontrolled carbon dioxide emissions.

“We’ve established a working relationship with the National Energy Technology Lab that will result in the materials we make at Pitt going directly into an application,” Friedman said. “Successfully developing and applying carbon-capturing molecules would be a good method for getting our arms around carbon dioxide emissions.”

Friedman also will develop and teach a short course on green chemistry as part of his fellowship and organize a seminar program that will bring leaders in green chemistry and chemical engineering to Pitt to make technical presentations and interact with students.

In addition, undergraduates will contribute to the development of green chemistry laboratory projects for mainstream introductory and organic chemistry courses. These students also will be involved with outreach with the University’s College in High School program and with Bidwell Training Center’s Chemical Technician program.
Awards & More

Pitt's 17 awards were the most of any organization entered in the competition. According to IABC/Pittsburgh organizers, 132 entries were received this year.

The University of Pittsburgh's Office of Public Affairs was honored with 17 awards by the Pittsburgh chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC).

Three projects produced by Public Affairs claimed the top prizes in their categories.

The honors were presented Sept. 26 at the 29th annual Golden Triangle Awards ceremony, held at the Twentieth Century Club in Oakland. Master of ceremonies was Jeffrey Antkowski, formerly a reporter at KDKA-TV and currently the head of Jennifer Productions, which produces At Home With Jennifer, a magazine, a locally syndicated newspaper column, and a weekly talk show for WTAE-TV.

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category “Individual Public Relations/Community Relations Projects” for the same project.

In addition, bronze Circle of Excellence Awards were presented to PittMed in the category “Special Interest Magazine” for their article on the 150th anniversary of the Emerita of the University; and to Pitt Magazine for “Periodical Staff Writing” for their article on the 200th anniversary of the University.

The Josiah Kirby Lilly Sr. Distinguished Service Award for outstanding contributions to the lives of persons with diabetes mellitus was given to Josiah Kirby Lilly Sr., son of the founder of Indianapolis-based Eli Lilly & Co., in recognition of his work in diabetes research.

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Concerts


Exhibitions


Regina Gouger Miller Gallery, Patricia Maurides, Michelle Boulitic, and Julie Stouden, through today, Parnell Center for the Arts, 5000 Forbes Ave., Oakland, Carnegie Mellon University, 412-268-3689, www.cmu.edu/millergallery.


Spike-Timing-Dependent Potentiation Identified Through Investigation of Activity at Individual Synapses, 10 a.m. Dec. X, 2149 Biomedical Science Tower.

Debra M. Wolf, School of Nursing, “Effect of Patient-Centered Care on Patient Satisfaction at Hospital Discharge,” 11 a.m. Dec. 3, 331 Victoria Building.

Alison M. Colbert, School of Nursing, “Analysis of Medication Administration, Medication-Related Medication Taking, and Adherence,” 1 p.m. Dec. 4, 451 Victoria Building.

Chen Li, Center for Neuroscience/Neurobiology, “Cellular Specialization of Synaptic Integration in a Mammalian Sym pathetic Ganglion,” 10 a.m. Dec. 5, 7 1496 Biomedical Science Tower.

Weigen Yo, Department of Bioengineering, “Umbrella Cell Response, Membrane Stretch and Stoch-Regulated Exocytosis in Trichomonas,” 1:30 p.m. Dec. 10, 1145 Scale Hall.

Happenings

Gamelon Open House, Bellefield Hall, Dec. 5


Bart Bugwe and Webb Wiggins, Bohemian Rhapsody: Eastern European Elegance, 8 p.m. Dec. 8, Synod Hall, 125 N. Craig St., Oakland.


Spike-Timing-Dependent Potentiation Identified Through Investigation of Activity at Individual Synapses, 10 a.m. Dec. X, 2149 Biomedical Science Tower.

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Tours/Lectures/Readings


“Former Colonies: Local or Universal?” Roberto Schwarz, Brazilian literary critic, 4 p.m. Dec. 5-6, 2149 Cathedral of Learning, 412-624-4666, www.english.pitt.edu.

“Methods and Issues in the Study of Child Development,” 3:30 p.m. Dec. 6, Andrea Hollander Budy and Sheryl Schwarz, Brazilian literary critic, 4 p.m. Dec. 5-6, 2149 Cathedral of Learning, 412-624-4666, www.english.pitt.edu.


“Umbrella Cell Response, Membrane Stretch and Stoch-Regulated Exocytosis in Trichomonas,” 1:30 p.m. Dec. 10, 1145 Scale Hall.

Opera/Theater/Dance

Student Performances

Seasons’ Greetings and The Santaluk Diaries by Dee Scheber, 8 p.m. Dec. 6, 7, Studio Theater, 872 Pitt Arts Building, 412-624-7529, www.pittarts.net. Sue-Ann Pappas, director and designer, Mexico, 8-10 p.m. Dec. 15, 12:30-3:30 p.m. Dec. 15, proceeds benefit the Pitt student chapter of the United States Institute for Theater Technology.


Muderesses, 8 p.m. through Dec. 16, Lester Hamburg Studio, 57 S. 13th St., South Side, 412-431-2949, www.pgharts.org.

This Wonderful Life, 8 p.m. through Dec. 16, O’Keefe Theatre, 621 Penn Ave., Downtown, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, 412-316-1600, www.pgharts.org.

Exhibitions


University Special Events


Pitt PhD Dissertation Defenses


“Methods and Issues in the Study of Child Development,” 3:30 p.m. Dec. 6, Andrea Hollander Budy and Sheryl Schwarz, Brazilian literary critic, 4 p.m. Dec. 5-6, 2149 Cathedral of Learning, 412-624-4666, www.english.pitt.edu.


“Umbrella Cell Response, Membrane Stretch and Stoch-Regulated Exocytosis in Trichomonas,” 1:30 p.m. Dec. 10, 1145 Scale Hall.
Pitt Survey: Privacy Rules Slow Medical Research, Add Cost

Ness’ report in JAMA says many health care studies delayed or abandoned

By Michele Baum

Federal rules intended to protect patient privacy also slow research necessary to find treatments and cures, a Pitt survey has found.

Implementation of the U.S. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) has severely eroded the process of scientific research, delaying some clinical studies and curtailing others before they even begin, said Roberta B. Ness, professor and chair of the Department of Epidemiology in Pitt’s School of Medicine.

Her findings, reported last month in the Journal of the American Medical Association, are part of the first national survey of epidemiologists commissioned by the Institute of Medicine, part of the National Academies of Science.

“HIPAA is adversely affecting our ability to conduct biomedical research,” said Ness, who also serves as an associate investigator at the Magee-Womens Research Institute (MWR) and as an advisor to the Institute of Medicine committee studying the issue. “The privacy rule has made research more costly and time consuming. As a result, some possibly important studies are just not being done.”

Epidemiologists analyze the development and control of a wide array of illnesses and their impact on public health.

Ness’ report, titled “Influence of the HIPAA Privacy Rule on Health Research,” appeared in the Nov. 14 issue of JAMA.

She surveyed 1,527 epidemiologists practicing in academia, government, industry, and other groups. Two-thirds of the respondents said that HIPAA had made research “a great deal” more difficult to accomplish.

In addition, a significant proportion of respondents reported more negative consequences for protecting human subjects than positive effects.

All respondents were part of the Joint Policy Committee of the Societies of Epidemiology, which cosponsored the study.

“We asked questions about both positive and negative potential impacts from the HIPAA privacy rule, including the impact on subject privacy, confidentiality and public trust, as well as on research procedures,” Ness said. “Almost 40 percent of respondents indicated that the privacy rule had increased research costs by a large degree, and nearly half said that significant additional time was required under the rule to complete projects.”

Established in 2003, HIPAA was designed to enhance patient privacy by restricting access to medical records while preserving the legitimate use of such information for important social goals.

Ness said that academic institutional review boards (IRBs) and other institutional bodies that govern research on human subjects vary widely in their interpretation of the rule.

That, she said, has resulted in a mishmash of conflicting procedures across the country, adding that some IRBs continue “business as usual,” while others have essentially shut down many research projects.

“According to our survey, there is a perception that HIPAA may even be having a negative effect on public health surveillance practices, and a lot of it is because of this variability in interpretation,” said Ness, president-elect of the American College of Epidemiology. “Some public health departments are defining a much broader portfolio of activities as research, and, therefore, are subject to HIPAA, more than other health departments. At this point, we’re not absolutely sure what that means in terms of public health — whether this poses any threat to combating epidemics or other dangers.”

While documenting negative HIPAA effects on a nationwide basis has been difficult, single-institution experience indicates widespread problems.

Recruitment for one study being conducted here at Pitt, for example, declined from more than a dozen people a week prior to HIPAA to an average of five at most after the rule took effect.

At the University of Michigan, patient consent for a study declined from more than 96 percent to 34 percent. In another study at Michigan, the implementation of HIPAA resulted in a nearly 73 percent decline in patient recruitment and a threefold increase in the time spent recruiting.

At the same time, only a quarter of epidemiologists said they thought HIPAA had achieved its goal of improving the confidentiality of patient information.

“Public opinion polls show that more than 90 percent of the public thinks it’s a priority for us to proceed expeditiously in uncovering new causes of and treatments for disease. Without any question, this survey suggests that the HIPAA legislation is impeding the progress of such research.”

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