

New or Augmented Duties Announced with Recent Administrative Changes

By Pamela Lewis, Public Affairs

A new, joint UT appointment at UT El Paso for Academic Affairs' Gilbert A. Castro, Ph.D.; a move from interim to permanent dean at the Dental Branch for Catherine Flaitz, D.D.S.; additional duties for Laura Smith, associate vice president for Finance; and the appointment of Mike Tramonte as assistant vice president for Accounting, are among administrative changes that took place recently at the UT Health Science Center.

Flaitz Named Dean of Dental Branch

In July, Catherine Flaitz, D.D.S., was named dean of The University of Texas Dental Branch at Houston after serving as interim dean of the school since September 2002.

"This is an exciting time for the school," said Flaitz, "as we look forward to beginning our second century of providing excellent education and clinical care and further developing our research and discovery enterprise. There is an optimistic and collaborative spirit within the school and the community that is generating a positive momentum for growth. The timing is perfect for the Dental Branch to partner with colleagues in the Texas Medical Center to explore the ways that molecular medicine can improve oral health."

In announcing her appointment, James T.



Catherine Flaitz, D.D.S., with President James T. Willerson, M.D., at the announcement of Flaitz's appointment as dean of the Dental Branch. Photo by Darrel Gonzales

Willerson, M.D., health science center president, said, "I am truly proud of Dr. Flaitz's accomplishments and the enthusiasm she brings to this position. "Her experience in private practice and in academia is superb."

Under Flaitz's direction, the Dental Branch

has created new programs while also dealing with budget reductions and reorganization. Recent achievements include:

- the creation of a new D.D.S./Ph.D. track,
- the creation of a baccalaureate in dental hygiene,

- participation in an extensive self-study program for the 2005 re-accreditation,
- development of a multidisciplinary and comprehensive patient care teaching model,
- implementation of faculty development and enrichment programs, and
- expansion of community outreach activities.

In addition, the Dental Branch has received two federally funded research and education training grants to enhance the quality of the new programs. The school also is incorporating new technologies such as dental simulation into the educational programs, developing new initiatives to supplement traditionally low faculty salaries, and updating equipment in the clinics, teaching laboratories and classrooms – just in time for its milestone 100th anniversary.

At the same time, the school has capitalized on educating and training students while providing high-quality care to patients who otherwise couldn't afford it.

"The UT Dental Branch has always had an excellent reputation for clinical care, and that is something I am very proud of," said Flaitz. "The school provides almost a million dollars

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The Body's Clock at Heart of Research by IMM, Medical School Faculty

By Scott Merville, Public Affairs

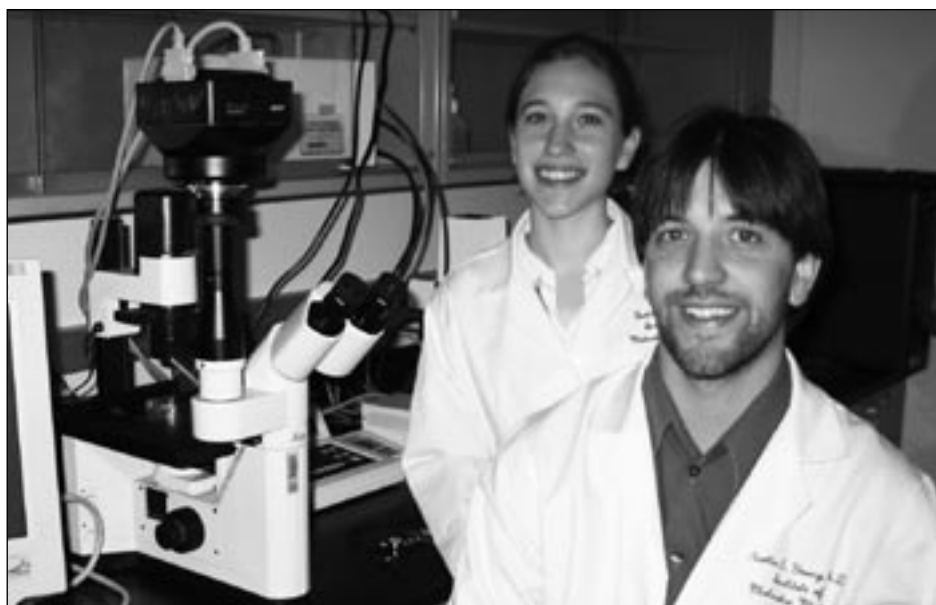
Researchers at the Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases (IMM) and the Medical School (MS) are examining aspects of the body clock to understand:

- shift workers' greater risk of heart disease and early morning cardiovascular death; and
- the molecular processes that may point to the therapeutic potential of vitamin B12.

Cellular Clocks May Play a Role in Heart Clock's Anticipatory Changes

University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston researcher Martin Young, D.Phil., suspects anticipation might be the key to the higher incidence of early morning cardiovascular death and the greater risk of heart disease that threatens people who work different shifts. He is working to characterize the heart's molecular circadian clock under a recently awarded \$1.5 million grant from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

"Our hearts 'wake up' before we do. Our heart rate and blood pressure, for example, rise before we become conscious," said Young, an assistant professor at the Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases. The circadian clock within the individual cells of the heart



Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine researcher Martin Young, D. Phil., and second-year medical student Novice Trexler study rat heart cells in Young's lab at the IMM. Trexler worked in the lab under the Health Science Center's Summer Research Program. Photo by Jennifer Canup

may play a role in this anticipatory phenomenon. By knowing the time of day, the heart can anticipate changes in its environment that occur in a 24-hour period.

"What does the clock mechanism allow the heart to anticipate? It might be the availability of nutrients — we eat soon after awakening,

for example, or a greater workload for the heart. Those are among the factors we are examining," he said. "It is possible that the clock mechanism is abnormal in a diseased heart, preventing the heart from anticipating its environment. This may contribute to the progression of heart disease."

Finding out how the heart clock "resets" each day, as well as identifying which environmental demands the reset mechanism allows the heart to anticipate, are major goals of Young's research.

The body's central circadian clock, based in a part of the brain known as the suprachiasmatic nucleus, is reset by daylight. However, to date, molecular clocks have been identified in every cell investigated in the mammalian body, Young explained. These non-central clocks are known as peripheral clocks. When the central clock resets, it signals the peripheral clocks to reset as well. Young wants to determine what signals reset the clock within the heart by studying both animal models and humans.

In rats, Young's research first will characterize more thoroughly influences that drive the clock within the heart and the stimuli that the clock allows the heart to anticipate. Next, he and his colleagues will examine what happens when the heart clock is impaired, through manipulating the rats' light-dark cycle, for example.

These experiments may improve our understanding of the mechanisms responsible for increased heart disease in shift workers. Finally, the lab will generate and characterize geneti-

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New A&P Performance Appraisal Process Begins in FY05

A pilot program that began early in FY04 has been completed at the UT Health Science Center at Houston to get feedback on the implementation of a new A&P performance appraisal.

The new annual appraisal, said Michael Jimenez, vice president, Human Resources, will better align goals across the health science center and improve consistency in the required appraisals. The tool creates better alignment with the health science center's Compact with UT System and improves goal-setting while increasing focus on areas important to the university. The appraisals will be due by Oct. 15 each year; be collected by Human Resources to identify collective training needs; provide valuable data-mining to predict trends; provide timely information to tie salary decisions to performance.

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