Building strong communities
Obama Foundation event aims to empower next generation of leaders / pg. 3

“My hope is that this becomes the foundation, the architecture, whereby in 10 years from now we can look back and say that we have revolutionized medicine.”

- President Barack Obama

Daily fasting works for weight loss

East Meets West highlights collaborations

Gilman scholars study abroad this summer

Softball player named league scholar-athlete of season
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Obama Foundation hosts Community Conversation at UIC

By Carlos Sadovi — csadovi@uic.edu

With University of Illinois at Chicago Chancellor Michael Amiridis standing alongside him before hundreds of grass-roots leaders, Obama Foundation CEO David Simas recalled how the former president told him in 2016 that his best work was still to come.

That work, creating stronger communities, was on display Tuesday at the Isadore and Sadie Dorin Forum at UIC, where the foundation hosted the Chicago Community Conversation.

The event included daylong panel sessions on issues ranging from social justice initiatives, youth as game changers, building strong communities, using art and museums to represent communities, and the availability of health care in underserved communities. The foundation plans a series of these discussions around the country and internationally, including an upcoming gathering in Johannesburg, South Africa.

“We looked at him (Obama) and said, ‘What?’” Simas said. “He said, ‘I want to devote the rest of my life to creating an institution whose sole mission is to inspire and empower the next generation of leaders to change their world. That is our North Star.’

UIC hosted the group’s first major program because of its early commitment to bringing the Obama Presidential Center to Chicago, Simas said.

“When the President and Mrs. Obama were deciding where to put the Obama Presidential Center, UIC was one of the first institutions that said, ‘Because of that focus on civic engagement and leadership, it must be here,’” Simas said.

Amiridis said that UIC’s relationship with the foundation was a strong one built on many “common values” that the university has maintained throughout the last 50 years.

“We also have a common desire for change and opportunity,” Amiridis said. “This institution (UIC) was created by and for the people of Chicago, and it was created on the principles of public service, civic engagement and social justice.

“We are providing solutions to some of the toughest social crises that we are facing.”

A pre-recorded video featured former President Barack Obama, who referred to the fact that the gathering coincided with Juneteenth, the annual celebration of the emancipation of enslaved black people in confederate states and the announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas — two years after the Emancipation Proclamation became law.

“We have a lot to learn from you, about what you’ve been doing to make change possible. Change isn’t easy; sometimes it can seem like progress comes frustratingly slow. I know that firsthand. But sometimes, to strengthen my faith, I think about citizens like you,” Obama said.

Lisa Yun Lee, UIC professor of art and art history, referenced the Juneteenth anniversary in a talk on what it means to be free on this anniversary in a nation where families are being torn apart at the border,” said Lee, who is executive director of the National Public Housing Museum. “We come together on this day — like on all days — to do what Chicagoans have always done when faced with great injustice. We organize. Because none of us are free until all of us are free.”

The event drew notable activists and leaders such as Billy Branch, a Grammy Award-nominated blues musician and UIC alum; Rami Nashashibi, MacArthur Genius Award winner and founder of the Inner-City Muslim Action Network; Masequa Myers, executive director of the South Side Community Arts Center, and Grammy Award-winning artist Daveed Diggs.

Another issue discussed was how inequality and lack of resources in poorer communities can have major and long-lasting repercussions on health care issues that are passed down from one generation to the next, said Dr. Robert Winn, associate vice chancellor for community based practice and director of the University of Illinois Cancer Center.

Winn, who also is a professor of medicine at UIC, said there is an important connection between science and social justice issues, and he pointed to violence, lack of access to healthy food choices, and environmental issues as having long-ranging consequences.

“Science is here, it’s just unevenly distributed;” Winn said. “Our challenge is to do good, not for some, but for all.”
School of Public Health establishes Mining Education and Research Center

By Sharon Parmet — sparmet@uic.edu

UIC has launched a new center that will consolidate efforts to provide education and clinical services, along with conducting research related to health and safety in the mining industry.

The UIC Mining Education and Research (MinER) Center is based in the UIC School of Public Health and will be directed by Dr. Robert Cohen, clinical professor of environmental and occupational health sciences in the UIC School of Public Health.

“The center will bring together, under one umbrella, all the projects we are working on that have to do with health effects associated with work in the mining industry, including lung disease from mineral dust exposure and injuries,” Cohen said. “We also provide services through our federally funded Black Lung Clinic and Center of Excellence. Our extensive international education and outreach programs help educate miners and health professionals regarding risks of injury and illness in the mining industry.”

The UIC MinER Center will become the home of several coal mining research projects at UIC, including a $1.8 million, three-year grant from the Alpha Foundation for the improvement of Mining Safety and Health, Inc., that will help determine why mine dust-related lung diseases, including progressive massive fibrosis and rapidly progressive pneumoconiosis, are on the rise. Other UIC studies funded by the Alpha Foundation will use big data sets to evaluate the course of black lung disease over a miner’s lifetime and look at malignant and non-malignant respiratory disease, as well as cardiovascular disease caused by mining activities.

Cohen and his colleagues both at UIC and at other institutions have led efforts around the globe that educate occupational, pulmonary and radiology physicians to better-recognize lung diseases caused by respirable dust produced in coal mines. Both silica and coal dust contribute to black lung disease — a progressive lung disease that Cohen and his team have found to be on the rise among coal workers.

“The mission of the UIC MinER Center is to help reduce the risk for mining-related health problems and treat and care for the mining workforce. These workers should not only exit the workplace safely at the end of each day but exit their careers in good health instead of being sickened by exposure to particulates that have damaged their lungs,” said Dr. Wayne Giles, dean of the UIC School of Public Health.

In Australia, Cohen and his group have been funded by the government of Queensland to train physicians to examine coal miners and identify coal mine dust-related lung disease on X-rays. Cohen’s team also discovered that lung disease is prevalent among coal workers there. “Our discovery of black lung disease among Australian miners, which had been thought to have been eradicated, had a significant influence in the regulatory environment and helped change policies to be more protective of miners’ health,” Cohen said.

Cohen and his colleagues also manage extensive education and training programs in the Appalachian region of the United States and are currently working with colleagues to launch educational programs in Colombia, South America.

The UIC Black Lung Clinic will also be folded into the UIC MinER Center. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funds black lung clinics throughout the United States, including the UIC clinic, which is housed at Northwestern Medicine. The clinic sees coal miners from around the world.

UIC is also designated as the only Black Lung Center of Excellence, also funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The center, which partners with colleagues at National Jewish Health in Denver, provides support for the black lung clinics nationally and training and research opportunities to clinicians and students interested in learning more about mining-related diseases.

UIC Police launch shower shoe drive for shelter

By Francisca Corona — fcoron3@uic.edu

Donate shower shoes on campus through Aug. 17 to help men and women at the Pacific Garden Mission, a homeless shelter on the Near West Side.

The donation drive, led by the UIC Police Department’s Policing and Community Engagement Unit, will help the shelter beat a shoe shortage, which exists because men and women sometimes need to use them as everyday footwear, explained UIC Police Lt. Todd Edwards.

“We set a goal to collect between 500 to 750 pairs of shower shoes,” he said. “We want to bring awareness to the community and let them know that Pacific Garden Mission needs our help.”

The donation drive isn’t the first collaboration between UIC Police and the Pacific Garden Mission. In January, UIC Police officers presented more than 100 pairs of jeans and other clothing items to the Pacific Garden Mission after hosting a donation drive on campus.

White boxes to collect the shoes are available on the east and west sides of campus. For more information, call (312) 996-6779.
Daily fasting works for weight loss, UIC researchers find

By Jackie Carey — jmcarey@uic.edu

Daily fasting is an effective tool to reduce weight and lower blood pressure, according to a new study published by University of Illinois at Chicago researchers in the journal Nutrition and Healthy Aging.

The study is the first to examine the effect of time-restricted eating — a form of fasting that limits food consumption to select hours each day — on weight loss in obese individuals.

To study the effect of this type of diet, researchers worked with 23 obese volunteers who had an average age of 45 and average body mass index, or BMI, of 35.

"THE TAKE-HOME MESSAGE FROM THIS STUDY IS THAT THERE ARE OPTIONS FOR WEIGHT LOSS THAT DO NOT INCLUDE CALORIE COUNTING OR ELIMINATING CERTAIN FOODS."

Between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. the dieters could eat any type and quantity of food they desired, but for the remaining 16 hours they could only drink water or calorie-free beverages. The study followed the participants for 12 weeks.

When compared to a matched historical control group from a previous weight loss trial on a different type of fasting, the researchers found that those who followed the time-restricted eating diet consumed fewer calories, lost weight and had improvements in blood pressure. On average, participants consumed about 350 fewer calories, lost about 3 percent of their body weight and saw their systolic blood pressure decreased by about 7 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg), the standard measure of blood pressure. All other measures, including fat mass, insulin resistance and cholesterol, were similar to the control group.

"The take-home message from this study is that there are options for weight loss that do not include calorie counting or eliminating certain foods," said Krista Varady, associate professor of kinesiology and nutrition in the UIC College of Applied Health Sciences and corresponding author on the study.

While this is the first study to look at the 16:8 diet, named for its 16 hours of fasting and its 8 hours of "feasting," Varady says that the results align with previous research on other types of intermittent fasting diets.

"The results we saw in this study are similar to the results we’ve seen in other studies on alternate day fasting, another type of diet," Varady said. "But one of the benefits of the 16:8 diet may be that it’s easier for people to maintain. We observed that fewer participants dropped out of this study when compared to studies on other fasting diets."

Varady says that while the research indicates daily fasting works for weight loss, there have not yet been studies to determine if it works better than other diets, although the researchers observed the weight loss to be slightly less than what has been observed in other intermittent fasting diet studies.

"These preliminary data offer promise for the use of time-restricted feeding as a weight loss technique in obese adults, but longer-term, large-scale randomized controlled trials are required," Varady and her colleagues write.

"The 16:8 diet is another tool for weight loss that we now have preliminary scientific evidence to support," Varady said. "When it comes to weight loss, people need to find what works for them because even small amounts of success can lead to improvements in metabolic health."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than one-third of adults in the U.S. have obesity, which greatly increases the risk of metabolic diseases such as coronary heart disease and Type 2 diabetes, and that obesity is most prevalent among non-Hispanic black individuals and middle-age adults.

Co-authors on the study, which was funded by a University of Illinois Chicago Campus Research Board pilot grant and the National Institutes of Health (R01HL106228, F32DK107157 and T32HL007909), are Kelsey Gabel, Kristin Hody, Nicole Haggerty, Jeehee Song, Cynthia Krueger and John Trepapanski of UIC, and Satchidananda Panda of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies.

UIC-led partnership aims to help create, preserve monarch habitat

By Sharon Parment — sparmet@uic.edu

A new, multi-sector partnership coordinated by the Energy Resources Center at University of Illinois at Chicago is working together to develop a voluntary conservation agreement to aid the plight of the monarch butterfly.

Spanning more than 1.8 million acres of land over 45 states, 26 organizations — including agencies and businesses — are working to develop a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances, or CCAA. The conservation agreement, a regulatory mechanism within the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, encourages non-federal landowners and managers to adopt measures that are beneficial to key wildlife species and pollinators.

In the last 20 years, the population of monarch butterflies in the eastern U.S. has declined by 80 percent, putting the species in jeopardy. A primary cause of this decline is the loss of lands containing native flowering plants the butterflies need for food, including milkweed species.

This CCAA will help monarchs by incentivizing energy companies and transportation agencies to voluntarily adapt their land management practices to include the planting of native plants, the use of Integrated Vegetation Management best practices, and other conservation measures to maintain plants that monarchs and other pollinators need for survival. Integrated Vegetation Management is the practice of promoting desirable, stable, low-growing plant communities that will resist invasion by tall growing tree species through the use of appropriate, environmentally sound and cost-effective control methods.

"Participating organizations can ensure that monarchs have more food and habitat available, while also continuing to deliver safe transportation and energy," said Iris Caldwell, program manager of the UIC’s Energy Resources Center and lead coordinator of the partnership.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been continually monitoring monarch population trends and evaluating existing conservation strategies with the goal of restoring the species to a sustainable level.

The CCAA builds upon several existing initiatives, including the Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy developed under the leadership of the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the collaborative efforts of the Rights-of-Way as Habitat Working Group organized by the University of Illinois at Chicago.

"Encouraging conservation measures throughout energy and transportation landscapes plays an important part in securing thriving populations of the monarch butterfly and other pollinators for generations to come," said Caldwell.

Housed in the UIC College of Engineering, the UIC Energy Resources Center provides comprehensive and cutting-edge solutions for energy and environmental challenges in the institutional, industrial and commercial sectors. The Energy Resources Center’s efforts are assisted by Cardno, an environmental consulting firm; the University of Georgia Business Law Clinic; and the Environmental Policy Innovation Center.
UIC researchers have received a $2.7 million, four-year grant from the National Institutes of Health to investigate possible links between the lung microbiome and sarcoidosis.

Sarcoidosis is an inflammatory disease that attacks multiple organs, particularly the lungs and lymph nodes, and disproportionately affects African Americans. Pulmonary fibrosis is the No. 1 cause of death among sarcoidosis patients. Approximately 30 percent of patients develop a progressive, debilitating form of sarcoidosis, but the mechanisms responsible for driving worsening or resilience to the disease remain poorly understood.

While most people are aware that the gut contains trillions of bacteria, viruses and other bugs that collectively are called the “microbiome” — other organs have their own microbiomes, including the lungs. And like in the gut, the microbiome is believed to play a role in disease.

Previous research has suggested that an immune response to an unknown microbe is responsible for the development of sarcoidosis, but investigations seeking to identify single agents have come up empty-handed.

“We think that sarcoidosis may be driven by interactions between the host’s lung microbiome and their immune system, rather than by a single organism,” said Dr. Patricia Finn, the Earl M. Bane Professor of Medicine and head of the department of medicine in the College of Medicine. “People who are resilient and don’t develop a severe form of the disease may have different microbiome/immune response signatures compared to those that go on to develop severe sarcoidosis,” said Finn, who is also professor of microbiology and immunology at UIC.

Dr. Nadera Sweiss in the College of Medicine and Yang Dai, associate professor in the Richard and Loan Hill department of bioengineering, are also investigators on the grant. Dai’s lab models host-microbe interaction to understand its role in diseases and wellness.

In previous research, Finn, who is a co-principal investigator on the grant, and colleagues found that patients with sarcoidosis had a unique signature microbiome that was different than that of patients without sarcoidosis. They also found novel biomarkers related to disease severity that were associated with worse lung function in sarcoidosis patients. Additionally, they discovered that pathways involved in apoptosis — programmed cell death — and autophagy — a normal process by which cells are destroyed and their components recycled — were abnormally activated in sarcoidosis patients compared with patients without the disease.

The researchers will enroll approximately 170 sarcoidosis patients seen in the University of Illinois Hospital’s Bernie Mac Sarcoidosis Translational Advanced Research (STAR) Clinic and the UIC Center for Lung Health. They will sequence the DNA of microbiotic organisms from tissue samples collected from the lungs, blood and stool of patients with sarcoidosis and examine differences in immune responses to the microbes.

“Two sarcoidosis patients may have very similar lung microbiomes, but in one patient, their disease progresses rapidly, while in another, the disease remains stable. So we want to know if there is a difference in how their immune system responds to the microbiota that might be the factor driving worsening sarcoidosis,” said Dr. David Perkins, professor of medicine, surgery, and bioengineering at UIC and co-principal investigator on the grant.

The researchers will examine changes in the microbiome and immune response in sarcoidosis patients at different time periods over the course of two years.

“We’ll be looking for biomarkers linked with worsening or improving disease over time,” said Perkins, who is also director of the metagenomic sequencing core in the UIC College of Medicine. “That way we may be able to predict who will get worse over time and approach the clinical care of that patient with that in mind.”

Are you involved in an east-west collaboration? Email christyb@uic.edu and we may feature your story!
UIC report details barriers facing Chicago’s Asian-Americans

By Brian Flood — bflood@uic.edu

Despite stereotypes that Asian-Americans are a “model minority” unaffected by racial discrimination, a report from UIC cross-campus researchers details the barriers that Chicago’s Asian-Americans face due to racial inequities in housing, education and labor.

“A Tale of Diversity, Disparity, and Discrimination: The State of Racial Justice for Asian American Chicagoans” also highlights major demographic changes in Chicago’s Asian-American community, which is the city’s most diverse and fastest growing racial/ethnic group.

The report was developed by UIC’s Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy in partnership with UIC’s Great Cities Institute and Asian Americans Advancing Justice Chicago. Metropolitan Family Services, a leading human services agency, commissioned the work.

“The findings present multiple ways that the lives of Asian-Americans in Chicago are deeply affected by racial inequality,” said William Scarborough, report co-author and research assistant at the institute. “As the size and influence of this community continues to grow, the report can help inform ongoing discussions on racial equity in the city.”

Key findings include:

**Demographic change:**
- Between 2000 and 2010, Chicago’s Asian-American population grew 16 percent. In the same period, the population of whites and blacks decreased, and the population of Latinos grew by 3.3 percent.
- Chicago has the seventh-largest Asian-American population among major cities in the U.S., with a population of more than 160,000.

**Housing:**
- Asian-Americans, who reside primarily in Chicago’s Southwest and far North Side neighborhoods, are highly segregated from blacks and Latinos, and moderately segregated from whites.
- Like other racial/ethnic groups in Chicago, Asian-Americans tend to live around people of the same race as themselves, but they face significant difficulties accessing home financing, even when attempting to move to more diverse neighborhoods.
- Asian-Americans are less likely than whites to be approved for home loans, especially when those homes are in predominantly white neighborhoods.

**Education:**
- Asian-Americans are about equally as likely to have a college degree as whites, but they are twice as likely to have never graduated high school.
- Educational attainment varies significantly by Asian-American ethnicity. The majority of Indian and Korean Chicagoans have a college degree, while more than one-fifth of Chinese, Vietnamese and Cambodian Chicagoans have less than a high school diploma.
- Asian-Americans receive lower financial returns for advanced educational degrees. Asian-Americans with a college degree earn only $10 an hour more than Asian-Americans whose highest level of education is less than high school. For whites, this return on education is $15.

**Economics:**
- After accounting for personal and work-related factors, Asian-Americans are paid 7 percent less than whites, and this racial wage gap exceeds 20 percent in the retail and transportation industries.
- Asian-Americans are 17 percent less likely than equally situated whites to work as a manager and among college degree holders, they are 25 percent less likely than whites to work as a manager.

“By highlighting multiple challenges facing Asian-Americans in Chicago, this report reveals yet another layer of racial inequity in the city, while also serving as a critical document to inform local policy that improves the lives of all Chicago residents,” said co-author Amanda Lewis, director of the institute and professor of African American studies and sociology.

The report also features expert commentaries on various issues affecting Asian-Americans in Chicago. These commentaries provide perspectives on Asian-Americans’ experience in higher education, civic engagement in Asian-American communities, health outcomes for Asian-Americans, and the impact of public policy and activism on racial equity.

Reflecting on the implications of the report in his commentary, Mark Martell, director of UIC’s Asian American Resource and Cultural Center, writes, “This report gives voice to a historically overlooked racial group and provides direction for the overdue dialogue on the needs of Asian-American communities.”

In addition to Martell, other commentary authors are Brandon Lee, communications and research coordinator at Asian Americans Advancing Justice Chicago; Mansha Mirza, assistant professor of occupational therapy in the College of Applied Health Sciences; and Kathleen Yang-Clayton, clinical assistant professor of public administration.

Ivan Arenas, associate director for community partnerships in the institute, is also a co-author on the new report that serves as a follow up to the 2017 report, A Tale of Three Cities: The State of Racial Justice in Chicago, which detailed the divergent conditions for blacks, Latinos and whites in the intersecting domains of housing, economics, education, justice and health.
Drinking clear liquid before surgery OK, says University of Illinois Hospital

By Sharon Parmet — sparmet@uic.edu

Anyone who has had surgery is familiar with this phrase: “Don’t have anything to eat or drink after midnight the night before your surgery.”

The request, known as an NPO order — for nil per os, Latin for “nothing by mouth” — ensures that most patients arrive for their next-day surgery thirsty, hungry, and if they are heavy coffee drinkers, in the throes of a caffeine withdrawal headache. Hardly the condition you want to be in before going into surgery, notes Dr. Randal Dull, professor of anesthesiology at the University of Illinois Hospital.

That is just one of the reasons why the hospital is now one of just a small percentage in the United States to have dropped the NPO order for surgical patients. In 1999, the American Society of Anesthesiology revised its practice guidelines to allow patients clear liquids much closer to the time of surgery than midnight the night before surgery, but very few hospitals changed their own pre-surgical planning routines based on the new guidelines.

The NPO order is actually a holdover from a time when patients were anesthetized using ether and chloroform, and vomiting was common, Dull explained. “The aspiration fear is just not based on any scientific evidence,” said Dr. Ari Rubenfeld, assistant professor of otolaryngology at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine. “We were taught that all surgical patients were to be NPO after midnight while we were in medical school, but it’s no longer an example of best practices. More interesting is that the practice hasn’t effectively changed, even when the major professional anesthesiology society in the U.S. issues a new guideline effectively killing the NPO order as it stood.”

In 2016, Dull, Rubenfeld and Julie Moore, a clinical nursing consultant at the University of Illinois Hospital, led a multidisciplinary task force to improve surgical patient outcomes and experience. They quickly zeroed in on the NPO order as the first thing that needed to change.

In May 2016, the hospital revised pre-op instructions to encourage patients to drink clear liquids up to two hours before their surgeries. In their pre-surgery instruction packet, patients are given a packet of sports drink powder, and are instructed to mix it into three cups of water and drink half before going to sleep the night before surgery, and to drink the remaining half when they wake up the day of surgery. Once patients arrive at the hospital, if their procedure is expected to start in more than two hours, they are encouraged to have additional clear liquids — water, apple juice, more sports drink, or even coffee without milk, which is considered a clear liquid. “Having clear liquids, especially liquids that contain some carbohydrate, like sports drinks or juice, not only helps improve patient outcomes, but our patients also feel better before and even after their surgery,” said Rubenfeld.

Some studies also suggest that surgical stress can result in insulin resistance and hyperglycemia and that consumption of carbohydrate beverages can reduce insulin resistance during and after surgery. Having liquids closer to surgery can also help with starting intravenous lines. “For some dehydrated patients, it means its harder for us to find a vein to start IVs, and patients get poked multiple times. By allowing liquids up to two hours before surgery, these complications are reduced,” said Dull.

Today, about 98 percent of UI Hospital patients follow the new guideline and have something to drink up to two hours before their surgery. The success of the new program is due largely to staff education. “The NPO order dogma is so ingrained, that we knew well we would have to launch a coordinated, intensive educational campaign to get everyone on board,” said Moore. “We needed to effect a core cultural change in what we tell our pre-operative patients.”

“The acceptance of this initiative has been very impressive. We’re proud to say we have almost total compliance from the staff in how they are instructing patients to prepare for surgery regarding the new guideline around having something to drink,” Dull said.

One-third of US adults may unknowingly use medications that can cause depression

By Sharon Parmet — sparmet@uic.edu

A new study from UIC researchers suggests that more than one-third of U.S. adults may be using prescription medications that have the potential to cause depression or increase the risk of suicide, and that because these medications are common and often have nothing to do with depression, patients and health care providers may be unaware of the risk.

The researchers retrospectively analyzed medication use patterns of more than 26,000 adults from 2005 to 2014, which were collected as part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. They found that more than 200 commonly used prescription drugs — including hormonal birth control medications, blood pressure and heart medications, proton pump inhibitors, antacids and painkillers — have depression or suicide listed as potential side effects.

Published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, the study is the first to demonstrate that these drugs were often used concurrently and that concurrent use, called polypharmacy, was associated with a greater likelihood of experiencing depression. Approximately 15 percent of adults who simultaneously used three or more of these medications experienced depression while taking the drugs, compared with just 5 percent for those not using any of the drugs, 7 percent for those using one medication and 9 percent for those taking two drugs simultaneously.

The researchers observed similar results for drugs that listed suicide as a potential side effect. These findings persisted when the researchers excluded anyone using psychotropic medications, considered an indicator of underlying depression unrelated to medication use.

“The takeaway message of this study is that polypharmacy can lead to depressive symptoms and that patients and health care providers need to be aware of the risk of depression that comes with all kinds of common prescription drugs — many of which are also available over the counter,” said lead author Dima Qato, assistant professor of pharmacy systems, outcomes and policy in the UIC College of Pharmacy.

“Many may be surprised to learn that their medications, despite having nothing to do with mood or anxiety or any other condition normally associated with depression, can increase their risk of experiencing depressive symptoms, and may lead to a depression diagnosis,” Qato notes that the study also shows an important trend of increasing polypharmacy for medications with depression, particularly suicidal symptoms, as a potential adverse effect. This makes the need for awareness of depression as a potential side effect even more pressing.
Donald (Don) Hellison, professor emeritus of kinesiology and former faculty member in the College of Education, died June 6. He was 80.

Hellison is best known for using physical education, sport and physical activity to teach children social skills and responsibility, improving the lives of at-risk youth. He dedicated more than 40 years of his life to developing and sharing this teaching philosophy across the globe.

Before coming to UIC in the late 1980s, Hellison earned his degrees from Kent and Ohio State universities. After developing an interest for teaching in the U.S. Marine Corps, he served as a professor at Portland State University for 16 years, then moved to what was then-called UIC’s College of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. At UIC, he was a professor of kinesiology, teaching physical education at the undergraduate and graduate levels. He also directed the Urban Youth Leader Project for underserved children and youth in Chicago.

Throughout his career, he received numerous awards, including the Gulick Medal, several UIC teaching awards, and the prestigious International Olympic Committee President’s Prize for significant scholarly contributions to physical education and sports pedagogy in 1995. In 1999, he was inducted into the National Association for Sports and Physical Education Hall of Fame.

“It indicates some recognition for my work,” Hellison said about the honor in a 1999 interview with UIC News, “but it only means that whatever you’re doing has kicked up enough dust that someone has noticed.”

Educators continue to notice Hellison’s contributions to the field. Many still use his model and strategies in their classrooms. Two of his published books, *Youth Development and Physical Activity: Linking Universities and Communities and Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility through Physical Activity*, are considered must-reads for professionals who work in urban schools or programs.

“Don’s work has international impact in Spain, Greece and the UK in physical education and sport, and his students and collaborators have used his work to enhance the experience of thousands of children,” said John Coumbe-Lilley, clinical associate professor of kinesiology and nutrition and Hellison’s last teaching assistant. “He also helped establish a Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility conference at UIC and helped set up the UIC College of Education’s Youth Development master’s degree.”

“He was one of the most dedicated professionals I have had the privilege of knowing, and he will be sorely missed,” said Randy Stone, coordinator of Graduate Educational Programs for kinesiology and nutrition.

Hellison is survived by his wife, Judith Hellison; as well as many cousins and other family. Services have been held.
Blockchain project wins ‘People’s Choice’ award at national medical conference

By Jackie Carey — jmcarey@uic.edu

Two doctors at UIC have won the People’s Choice Award from the Society for Imaging Informatics in Medicine for their project “Diagnosis Protocol — Using Blockchain to Accelerate Artificial Intelligence in Medical Imaging.” The project, which beat out nearly 30 other submissions, seeks to improve the health care community’s ability to diagnose disease.

“In most scenarios, a single human decides on a diagnosis,” said Dr. Roger Boodoo, a radiologist and clinical informatics fellow at UIC. “While these medical experts are well-trained, there is still the potential for human error.”

“We want to eliminate this human error when it comes to image-based diagnoses,” Boodoo said.

That is why Boodoo and his colleague Dr. Al Alsadi, a pathologist, are using blockchain technology to create an online platform that, they hope, will enable artificial intelligence to aid physicians in making a diagnosis.

“Right now, AI capabilities for making an imaging-based medical diagnosis are limited because computers lack a comprehensive set of data to analyze as a reference,” said Alsadi, who is also a clinical informatics fellow.

Their Diagnosis Protocol project encourages patients, physicians and health care institutions to upload de-identified images and input associated diagnoses. The incentive is a token (paid based on the quality of data and physician participation in identifying associated diagnoses), which users can trade as cryptocurrency, similar to bitcoin. The platform will use blockchain technology to compare data, find errors and correct those errors with consensus-based algorithms.

“Once we have enough data, the potential for AI-assisted diagnostics is nearly limitless,” Alsadi said.

“The help of AI technology would be like having a second set of eyes — perfect eyes — on every image and scan a doctor uses to make diagnosis,” Boodoo said.

Boodoo estimates that up to 70 percent of all conditions may be diagnosed by imaging, from X-rays and ultrasounds to complex MRI and PET scans.

Diagnosis Protocol was one of eight projects to make it to the semifinal and one of four projects to make it to the final round, following a “Shark Tank”-style presentation to judges. It is the only project encouraged patients, physicians and health care institutions to upload de-identified images and input associated diagnoses. Each user is given a token (paid based on the quality of data and physician participation in identifying associated diagnoses), which users can trade as cryptocurrency, similar to bitcoin. The platform will use blockchain technology to compare data, find errors and correct those errors with consensus-based algorithms.

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Boodoo estimates that up to 70 percent of all conditions may be diagnosed by imaging, from X-rays and ultrasounds to complex MRI and PET scans.

Diagnosis Protocol was one of eight projects to make it to the semifinal and one of four projects to make it to the final round, following a “Shark Tank”-style presentation to judges. It is the only winner of the People’s Choice Award, which was presented June 2 in National Harbor, Maryland, during the conference’s closing keynote address.

“This win validates the concept of a blockchain health care startup from the health care community,” Boodoo said. “To my knowledge, that hasn’t happened before at a medical conference. We are a very conservative group as an industry.”

Boodoo and Alsadi say they hope to one day hold an ICO, or Initial Coin Offering — a fundraising mechanism in which new projects sell crypto tokens in exchange for bitcoin or ether.

UIC authors to be honored at Carl Sandburg Literary Awards Dinner

By Brian Flood — bflood@uic.edu

Mary Anne Mohanraj, clinical associate professor of English, is one of 85 authors and creatives with ties to Chicago who will be honored guests at the 18th annual Carl Sandburg Literary Awards Dinner hosted by Chicago Public Library and the Chicago Public Library Foundation.

Mohanraj is the author of 12 books, including the Sri Lankan-American novel Bodies in Motion, which was a finalist for the Asian American Book Awards and has been translated into six languages.

As one of the celebrated writers, Mohanraj will be seated at a table with attendees to give them the opportunity to discuss her work and creative process over dinner.

In addition, author and poet Erika L. Sanchez, a 2006 UIC graduate in English (creative writing concentration) and former Honors College member, will receive the 21st Century Award presented for recent achievements by a Chicago writer. Her bestselling debut novel, I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter, was named a 2017 finalist for the National Book Award for young people’s literature.

This year’s Carl Sandburg Literary Award will be presented to author Judy Blume and astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson. The evening fundraising event will feature a conversation with Blume and Tyson moderated by National Public Radio host Scott Simon.

The 18th annual Carl Sandburg Literary Awards Dinner will be held Oct. 9 at the UIC Dorin Forum, 725 W. Roosevelt Rd. For more information, visit cplfoundation.org
UIC students awarded Gilman study abroad scholarships for summer

Ten UIC students have been awarded U.S. State Department Benjamin A. Gilman scholarships to study abroad this summer.

The UIC recipients are among more than 1,200 American undergraduate students from 363 colleges and universities across the U.S. selected for the honor.

The Gilman International Scholarship Program, sponsored by the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, aims to diversify the group of students who study abroad and their destinations. To be eligible for the award, students must demonstrate financial need by receiving a federal Pell Grant for their studies.

Scholars receive up to $5,000 to apply toward their study abroad program costs. Since 2006, UIC students have won more than 170 Gilman scholarships, totaling approximately $875,000.

The latest UIC recipients, representing public health, applied health sciences, business administration, education, and liberal arts and sciences, are:

- Jacqueline Alexander, a junior in kinesiology from Chicago (West Pullman), studying in Barcelona, Spain
- Aaron Ayala, a senior in finance from Chicago (Belmont-Cragin), studying in Barcelona, Spain
- Cristian Baeza, a junior in human development and learning from Chicago (West Elsdon), studying in Barcelona, Spain
- Tabitha Birtell, a senior in biological sciences and anthropology from Algonquin, Illinois, studying in Moquegua, Peru

- Jonathan Castro, a senior in Latin American and Latino studies from Chicago (Portage Park), studying in Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Luis Cruz, an Honors College junior in information and decision sciences from North Aurora, Illinois, studying in Barcelona, Spain
- Lesly Lopez, a senior in public health from Aurora, Illinois, studying in Santiago De Los Caballeros, Dominican Republic
- Leni Redmond, an Honors College junior in nursing from Chicago (Morgan Park), studying in Gaborone, Botswana
- Sarah Sanchez, an Honors College junior in biological sciences from Chicago (Back of the Yards), studying in Oaxaca, Mexico
- Toni Spence, a senior in business management from Montego Bay, Jamaica, who currently resides in Worth, Illinois, studying in Florence, Italy

The Gilman program is funded through the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000 and is administered by the Institute of International Education’s Southern Regional Center in Houston. The program honors former U.S. Rep. Benjamin A. Gilman of New York, who was chair of the House Foreign Relations Committee.

By Brian Flood — bflood@uic.edu
Cairns repeats as Horizon League Scholar-Athlete of the Season

By Jenn Zoellick — jennz@uic.edu

UIC softball alumna Taylor Cairns, who graduated in May with a degree in biological sciences, was named the Horizon League Female Scholar-Athlete of the Season for the spring.

The award, presented at the end of each of the three athletic seasons each year, is based on athletic and academic achievements and voted on by the league’s faculty athletic representatives. Cairns is a repeat winner of the award, as she was named the top student-athlete among all Horizon League softball, golf, tennis, and track and field teams last year, too.

Cairns was a leader for the Flames squad, which won the Horizon League regular season and tournament championships for the second straight season and advanced to the NCAA Lexington Regional. She started all 54 games this season, earning spots on the All-Horizon League First Team and the conference's All-Tournament Team. She batted .315 with 51 hits, 29 runs scored, a 19-for-20 success rate in stealing bases, and was the conference leader in fewest strikeouts.

In addition to earning the Horizon League Post-Graduate Scholarship award and placing on the league’s All-Academic team for the second time, she earned CoSIDA Google Cloud Academic All-American honors this spring. These come in addition to her many awards and honors from UIC’s biological sciences department. UIC’s third-leading base stealer of all time, Cairns sports a career fielding percentage of .949 at second base and a strikeout rate of just 9.3 percent. She will enroll in UIC’s College of Pharmacy this fall to begin work on her Doctor of Pharmacy degree.

UIC pitcher collects postseason honors

By Dan Yopchick — yopchick@uic.edu

UIC starting pitcher Ryan Campbell continued to pile up postseason accolades as he was named to the 21st annual National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association (NCBWA) All-America Third Team.


In June, Campbell was named to the 2018 Mideast American Baseball Coaches Association/Rawlings All-Region First Team. He is the fourth member of the Flames to earn First Team honors in the last two seasons.

This spring, Campbell was voted as the Horizon League Pitcher of the Week and to the conference’s First Team. He earned a spot on the Horizon League Championship All-Tournament Team after a dominant outing in UIC’s first game and he picked up a pair of Horizon League Pitcher of the Week awards in 2018, as well.

Campbell capped a sensational senior season by earning eight wins in a team-high 13 starts and throwing five complete games, fourth most in the NCAA. Three of Campbell’s five complete games were shutouts, including two against Milwaukee.

The Carmel, Ind., native posted a 1.53 earned-run average in 94 innings pitched as a senior, a number that ranks him fourth in the country. It is also the seventh-best single-season mark in program history.

Campbell saved arguably his best performance for his last. In the first game of the Horizon League Championship, Campbell carried the Flames and went the distance and allowed just two hits in a 6-0 victory against Milwaukee May 24. He fanned five, did not walk a Panther and retired 23 consecutive hitters from the second inning on to conclude the victory. He was named to the Horizon League Championship All-Tournament Team.

On June 5, Campbell joined the professional ranks when he was selected by the Cincinnati Reds in the fifth round of the 2018 Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft. The Reds took him with the draft’s 139th selection, making him UIC’s highest-drafted player since the Detroit Tigers grabbed Granderson with the 80th overall pick in 2002.