THE DAILY CLIPS

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ECU, UNC-CH ink pact

The two universities announce a new partnership for researching and treating cancer.

By Jimmy Ryals
The Daily Reflector

East Carolina University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill announced a new partnership for researching and treating cancer Tuesday.

The Leo Jenkins Cancer Center at ECU and the Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center at UNC-CH will collaborate on patient care, research and recruitment under an agreement signed in December.

The pact "represents another significant partnership in medical education with UNC-Chapel Hill," said ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard in a news release.

"It will be important to the Leo Jenkins Cancer Center, to the Brody School of Medicine at ECU, and, most importantly, to the citizens of North Carolina." Produced by more than a year of negotiations, the agreement sets the framework for a growing relationship between the two cancer centers, said Dr. Adam Asch, associate director of the Jenkins Cancer Center.

"We are sure it will profoundly enhance cancer care and research in the region," Asch said, adding that the partnership will improve quality of life for cancer patients in eastern North Carolina.

Three broad areas of collaboration appear in the nonbinding, 15-page memorandum of understanding:

- Access to Lineberger facilities and resources for Jenkins doctors, and vice versa. This condition opens Lineberger genomics, cell biology and library resources to ECU doctors. It also calls for the two centers to work together on recruiting new physicians.
- Integration of clinical research programs. ECU doc-

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tors and patients would gain access to Lineberger's robust research efforts. The Lineberger center is among the top 15 nationally in cancer research funding, according to UNC-CH. "What (Jenkins) patients and the region will gain is access to new drugs and therapies, some of which are still under study," Asch said.
- A patient care partnership. For instance, talks have begun about giving local bone marrow transplant patients pre- and post-surgical care in Greenville, rather than Chapel Hill, Asch said.

The agreement "sets out the framework and a direction, and I think that five years from now our relationship is likely to be tighter and more significant," Asch said.

Leaders of UNC-CH and the UNC system joined Ballard and Asch in hailing the agreement.

"This partnership exemplifies the role of top public medical schools to serve patients with leading-edge research and care," UNC-CH Chancellor James Moeser said in the news release. "North Carolina's two medical schools and their cancer centers can offer more services for more people as a result of this collaboration."

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Service to North Carolina is a key part of the university's mission, and this new partnership involving our two highly respected medical schools will help us advance and expand how we care for cancer patients, train physicians, and conduct collaborative research that benefits our citizens," said UNC President Erskine Bowles in the release.

"Working together, medical faculty and scientists at ECU and UNC-Chapel Hill can accomplish far more than they could individually. This is truly a case where two plus two can equal five."

Jimmy Ryals can be contacted at jryals@coxnc.com and 329-9568.
Study: Obesity surgery can cure diabetes in overweight patients

From staff, wire reports

CHICAGO — A new study gives the strongest evidence yet that obesity surgery can cure diabetes.

Patients who had surgery to reduce the size of their stomachs were five times more likely to see their diabetes disappear over the next two years than were patients who had standard diabetes care, according to Australian researchers.

Most of the surgery patients were able to stop taking diabetes drugs and achieve normal blood tests.

“It’s the best therapy for diabetes that we have today, and it’s very low risk,” said the study’s lead author, Dr. John Dixon of Monash University Medical School in Melbourne, Australia.

An East Carolina University researcher who pioneered a form of weight loss surgery welcomed the study’s results.

“For the first time diabetes is no longer a hopeless, incurable disease,” said Dr. Walter Pories, professor of surgery and biochemistry at the Brody School of Medicine. In 2003, the medical school was one of six institutions designated by the National Institutes of Health to be a center to study obesity and its surgical treatment.

The new study’s patients had stomach band surgery, a procedure more common in Australia than in the United States, where gastric bypass surgery, or stomach stapling, predominates.

Gastric bypass is even more effective against diabetes, achieving remission in a matter of days or a month, said Dr. David Cummings, who wrote an accompanying editorial in the journal but was not involved in the study.

“We have traditionally considered diabetes to be a chronic, progressive disease,” said Cummings of the University of Washington in Seattle.

“But these operations really do represent a realistic hope for curing most patients.”

Pories led a team at ECU that developed the most wide-
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ly used formed by gastric bypass surgery, the Roux-en-Y process. In Pories research, patients that underwent the process have seen diabetes symptoms disappear within days of the surgery.

Pories and other researchers believe gastric bypass, which removes a portion of the intestine, eliminates defective intestinal cells that signal excessive production of insulin. Pories said he hopes identify these cells and determine what causes the defect so a medical treatment can be produced in the future.

"Diabetes is our most expensive disease, it takes 13 cents out of every health care dollar," Pories said. "If we find a way to overcome this disease, this will be a tremendous breakthrough in health, especially in eastern North Carolina where diabetes is so common. It's nice to know a discovery made here in eastern North Carolina is having wide reaching results."

Diabetes experts who read the Australian study said surgery should be considered for some obese patients, but more research is needed to see how long results last and which patients benefit most. Surgery risks should be weighed against diabetes drug side effects and the long-term risks of diabetes itself, they said.

The diabetes benefits of weight-loss surgery were known, but the Australian study in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association is the first of its kind to compare diabetes in patients randomly assigned to surgery or standard care. Scientists consider randomized studies to yield the highest-quality evidence.

The study involved 55 patients, so experts will be looking for results of larger experiments under way.

"Few studies really qualify as being a landmark study. This one is," said Dr. Philip Schauer, who was not involved in the Australian research but leads a Cleveland Clinic study that is recruiting 150 obese people with diabetes to compare two types of surgery and standard medical care.

"This opens an entirely new way of thinking about diabetes."

Obesity is a major risk factor for diabetes, and researchers are furiously pursuing reasons for the link as rates for both climb. What's known is that excess fat can cause the body's normal response to insulin to go haywire. Researchers are investigating insulin-regulating hormones released by fat and the role of fatty acids in the blood.

In the Australian study, all the patients were obese and had been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes during the past two years. Their average age was 47. Half the patients underwent a type of surgery called laparoscopic gastric banding, where an adjustable silicone cuff is installed around the upper stomach, limiting how much a person can eat.

Both groups lost weight over two years; the surgery patients lost 46 pounds on average, while the standard-care patients lost an average of 3 pounds.

Blood tests showed diabetes remission in 22 of the 29 surgery patients after two years. In the standard-care group, only four of the 26 patients achieved that goal. The patients who lost the most weight were the most likely to eliminate their diabetes.

Both patient groups learned about low-fat, high-fiber diets and were encouraged to exercise. Both groups could meet with a health professional every six weeks for two years.

The death rate for stomach band surgery, which can cost $17,000 to $20,000, is about 1 in 1,000. There were only minor complications in the study. Stomach stapling has a 2 percent death rate and costs $20,000 to $30,000.

In the United States, surgeons perform more than 100,000 obesity surgeries each year.

The American Diabetes Association is interested in the findings. The group revises its recommendations each fall, taking new research into account.

"There is a growing body of evidence that bariatric surgery is an effective tool for managing diabetes," said Dr. John Buse of the University of North Carolina School of Medicine in Chapel Hill, the association's president for medicine and science.

"It's just a question of how effective is it, for what spectrum of patients, over what period of time and at what cost? Not all those questions have been answered yet."
SGA, City Council holding joint meeting on Thursday

By T. Scott Batchelor
The Daily Reflector

The Greenville City Council and East Carolina University Student Government Association are slated to hold a joint meeting Thursday.

The meeting might be the first between the boards. City Clerk Wanda Elks said no such summit has been held during her tenure, which began in 1991.

In the "distant past," the SGA president periodically would make presentations to the City Council, she said.

Thursday's meeting is scheduled for 5 p.m. in room 337 at City Hall, 200 W. Fifth St.

The advertised purpose is to have a dialogue on relations between the city and ECU students. The city's community-development department staff also will give a brief overview of student-related code-enforcement issues.

The meeting sprang from a suggestion made by Councilman Larry Spell during the council's annual planning session in January 2007. It came under the goal of forming effective partnerships, he said.

"Because the university plays a big role in the city, especially in my particular district (District 3), and I want to make sure there's a good working relationship not just with the administration of the university, but with the students," Spell said.

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Spell also wants to see "if we can't have an ongoing relationship into the future." When there is ongoing dialogue, issues tend to be solved quicker, he said.

Keri Brockett, president of the SGA, said the meeting offers an opportunity to review "policies and procedures for the city that specifically affect the students and the college community."

Brockett hopes to explore ways "to use each other to reach out to the community and kind of collaborate on some different ideas and initiatives," she said.

The two boards could explore ways to "bridge the gap between the city and university," she said. "We're hoping this will be something that continues."

In other City Council-related events this week, the council is holding its annual planning retreat at 8 a.m. Saturday at Bradford Creek Golf Course, 4950 Old Pactolus Road. A pre-retreat dinner is slated for 6 p.m. Friday at the golf course.

The dinner is a new initiative, Spell said.

"We're going to get an overview of what we're going to be talking about ... to sort of give us more time on Saturday for discussion of the issues," he said.

The annual planning session allows the six council members and mayor an opportunity to toss out new goals and tweak existing ones developed in previous retreats.

Because a new council, featuring three new members, is on the board after the November election, "We're going to go back and see if we need to change some goals, add some goals," Spell said.

As part of his own preparation, Spell will hold his annual "town hall" forum at 5:30 p.m. today at Jaycee Park's auditorium, 6000 Cedar Lane.

The meeting is designed "to get input from citizens before I go into the annual planning session ... to get a general sense of priorities of citizens in my district."

He also plans to have a presentation from Police Chief William Anderson on crime and ways the city is combating it, Spell said. New District 4 Councilman Calvin Mercer held a similar forum recently.

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Public Forum

Thank nurse anesthetists this week

During National Nurse Anesthetist Week (Jan. 20-26) it is fitting to honor contributions of local certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs) to the health care of residents in eastern North Carolina.

CRNAs are advanced practice nurses who administer almost all anesthetics in our region and the country, more than 27 million anesthetics in the United States each year. CRNAs have provided anesthesia care for more than 125 years. They are sole providers of anesthesia in more than two-thirds of rural hospitals in America, and they have provided almost all anesthesia for troops in the U.S. military since World War I.

In eastern North Carolina, CRNAs provide anesthesia care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, contributing to improvements in surgical outcomes and saving lives in trauma and obstetrical emergencies. CRNAs' safe practice helps facilitate surgical advances in neurosurgical, cardiac, bariatric and robotic surgeries. If you have had surgery, you were most likely under the watchful care of a CRNA.

In 2003, ECU College of Nursing opened a nurse anesthesia program in collaboration with University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina. Thirty-seven full-time students are enrolled in this 28-month program. The program is recognized as one of the best in the nation receiving an initial 10-year accreditation rating, the highest possible.

Working behind operating room doors and surgical masks, CRNAs often lack professional recognition. Most patients do not know that CRNAs provide their anesthesia care. This week, patients, surgeons, anesthesiologists and O.R. personnel can celebrate CRNAs' tremendous contributions by saying thank you.

If you are a patient preparing for surgery, ask to meet your nurse anesthetist before your surgery, so you, too, can say thank you in person.

MAURA McAULIFFE, CRNA, Ph.D.
Director
Nurse Anesthesia Program
College of Nursing
East Carolina University
In protection

Neighborhood integrity challenges city

The city of Greenville this month resolved its first suits aimed at enforcing an occupancy ordinance limiting the number of unrelated tenants in a dwelling. It is one of several city codes aimed at protecting the integrity of long-established neighborhoods in Greenville, and represents some of the most aggressive enforcement of a violation.

The protection of neighborhood integrity stands as a defining issue for the city’s future, one that will help determine the quality of life in this community for years to come. The City Council is expected to expend significant energy toward that end, but also needs the collaboration of landowners and residents to achieve this important common goal.

Neighborhood integrity emerged as a defining issue in November’s municipal election, though Greenville’s government has emphasized protection with greater focus in recent years. The city partners with East Carolina University to explain the rights and expectations to student renters, and has worked with neighborhood associations to areas for cooperation.

Last year, the city filed lawsuits against four landlords for excessive occupation in several housing units in the Tar River/University neighborhood, the first under that well-intentioned ordinance. This month, those landlords accepted mediated judgment and agreed to pay fines and to comply with the law.

That represents a new aggressiveness in code enforcement that many homeowners and neighborhood activists welcome. Certainly, the city must do its best to hold all property owners to the law, but an issue like over-occupancy directly affects the quality of life in that neighborhood and demands progressive action.

As Greenville’s population continues to grow, issues of neighborhood protection swell in importance, and residents should expect city officials to focus greater attention on them. They help define the type of community residents enjoy, and the city Greenville will be in the future.
Warming linked to fewer hurricanes

BY MARTIN MERZER
MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

MIAMI — Intensifying one of the hottest debates in science, a new report concludes that global warming actually is diminishing the number of hurricanes that strike the United States.

The study, produced by two Florida researchers, found that the planet’s oceans have been warming for more than a century. No surprise there, but this may be:

Those warmer oceans are producing stronger crosswinds that tend to suppress the development and growth of hurricanes.

“We found a gentle decrease in the trend of U.S. landfalling hurricanes as global oceans warmed up,” said Chunzai Wang, an oceanographer and climate scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s research facility on Virginia Key.

This latest study, conducted by Wang and Sang-Ki Lee of the University of Miami, will be published today in the journal Geophysical Research Letters.

Many other studies have used computerized statistical models to predict the future consequences of global warming, but Wang and Lee conducted a rigorous “observational” examination of records reaching back to 1854.

They found that nearly every ocean on Earth has warmed since then, producing stronger crosswinds, called wind shear.

When they matched those findings with records of hurricanes that have struck the United States, they discovered a correlation.

“The increased wind shear coincides with a weak but consistent downward trend in U.S. landfalling hurricanes, a reliable measure of hurricanes over the long term,” the report found.
Council to see plans for Carolina North

CHAPEL HILL - The Town Council will see the most detailed plans yet for the first building in UNC’s Carolina North campus at 7 p.m. today, at Town Hall, 405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

The proposed Innovation Center would be a three-story, 85,000-square-foot business incubator off Municipal Drive and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, about two miles north of the existing main campus. The center would have 210 parking spaces.

For more information, go to www.townofchapelhill.org and click on the meeting link under “Calendar,” then click on the link + “2008 Town Council Agendas.”
Army gets fewer high school grads

BY KIMBERLY HEFLING
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The percent of Army recruits with a high school diploma dropped over the past two years, continuing a trend that has worsened since the start of the Iraq war, according to a report released Tuesday.

National Priorities Project, a research group that analyzes federal data, found that nearly 71 percent of Army recruits in the 2007 budget year had graduated from high school, down from 83.5 percent in 2005. It based its findings on data it obtained from the Defense Department.

All troops must have a high school diploma or a general equivalency degree. The military prefers a high school diploma because its studies have shown graduates are more likely to finish an enlistment term. Still, the Army has paid for some recruits to take GED preparation classes and take the test.

The Army’s goal is 90 percent high school graduates, which it hasn’t met since 2004. Each year since, the number of recruits with at least a high school diploma has steadily declined.

Douglas Smith, spokesman for the Army Recruiting Command at Fort Knox, Ky., acknowledged it has been a difficult recruiting environment. He said overall high school graduation rates are declining, which could be a factor.

Strained by military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the military has had to increase the number of waivers and raise enlistment bonuses to fill its ranks.

“We don’t put unqualified people in the Army, but it’s something we’re watching,” Smith said.
Surgery backed for Type 2 diabetes

Stomach banding cured 75% in study

BY THOMAS H. MAUGH II
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Stomach banding surgery for weight loss cured nearly three-quarters of obese patients with Type 2 diabetes, five times as many as could be cured by medications, dieting and lifestyle changes, Australian researchers reported today.

In the first head-to-head comparison of banding and conventional weight-loss techniques, obesity specialist John B. Dixon of Monash University in Melbourne and his colleagues found that patients receiving the band lost an average of 20.7 percent of their body weight, while those on a medically supervised diet lost 1.3 percent.

Among those who lost at least 1 percent of their body weight — a number that included only one patient on the medically supervised diet — 87 percent were able to stop taking all diabetes medications within a year. Among those on the diet who did not lose that much, only 12 percent were able to stop taking medications, and all of them had very mild cases of diabetes to begin with.

The results were “clear and striking,” Dr. David E. Cummings and Dr. David R. Flum of the University of Washington wrote in an editorial in the same journal. “It may be time to view bariatric operations … as interventions about which all obese patients with diabetes should be informed and given access.”

Other studies have shown that the more invasive form of bariatric surgery, called a gastric bypass, produces an even bigger weight loss and cures Type 2 diabetes in 80 percent to 85 percent of patients, often within days of the surgery.

The findings demonstrate that “Type 2 diabetes is a disease that should aggressively be treated with surgery and not merely controlled with medication,” said Dr. Mitchell Roslin of Lenox Hill Hospital in New York, who was not involved in the study. “The truth is that the treatment of diabetes requires a lifestyle modification and only surgery makes that practical for the majority of obese diabetics.”

Nearly 20 million Americans have Type 2 diabetes, which is typically associated with obesity. Diabetes is the fifth-leading cause of death in the U.S.; the number of deaths from it has grown by 45 percent since 1987, even while the number of deaths from heart disease, cancer and stroke has been declining.

Bariatric surgery also has been growing, with the number of procedures performed yearly reaching 200,000 in 2006, 15 times as many as were performed eight years earlier. Still, researchers estimate that only about 1 percent of those who meet eligibility criteria for the surgery receive it.
Teens want adults off their virtual turf

BY MARTHA IRIANE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — Scott Seigal was awakened one recent early morning by a cell phone text message. It was from his girlfriend's mother.

His friends' parents have posted greetings on his MySpace page for all the world to see. And his 72-year-old grandmother sends him online instant messages every day so they can better stay in touch while he's at college.

"It's nice that adults know some things," says Seigal, 18, a freshman at Binghamton University in New York. He especially likes IMing with his grandma because he's "not a huge talker on the phone."

Increasingly, however, he and other young people are feeling uncomfortable about their elders encroaching on what many young adults and teens consider their technological turf.

Long gone are the days when the average middle-age adult did well to simply work a computer. Now those same adults have Gmail, upload videos on YouTube and sport the latest high-tech gadgets.

Young people have responded, as they always have, by searching out the latest way to stay ahead in the race for technological know-how and cool. They use Twitter, which allows blogging from one's mobile phone or BlackBerry, or Hulu.com, a site where they can download videos and TV programs.

They customize their cell phones with various faceplates and ringtones. And, sometimes, they find ways to exclude adults — using high-frequency ringtones that teens can hear but most adults can't, for instance.

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'Creepy' and uncool

Nowhere are the technological turf wars more apparent than on social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, which went from being student-oriented to allowing adults outside the college ranks to join.

Gary Rudman, a California-based youth market researcher, has heard the complaints. He regularly interviews young people who think it's "creepy" when an older person — we're talking someone they know — asks to join their social network as a "friend." It means, among other things, that they can view each other's profiles and what they and their friends post.

"It would be like a 40-year-old attending the prom or a frat party," Rudman says. "It just doesn't work."

It's a particular quandary for image-conscious teens, says Eric Kuhn, a junior at Hamilton College in upstate New York, who has blogged about the etiquette of social networking.

He accepted his mom's invitation to be Facebook friends and has, in turn, become online friends with other adults she knows. But so far, he says, his 16-year-old sister has declined to add their mom "because she thinks it is not cool."

Lakeshia Poole, a 24-year-old from Atlanta, says, "My Facebook self has become a watered down version of me." Worried about older adults snooping around, she's now more careful about what she posts and has also made her profile private, so only her online friends can see it.

"It's somewhat a Catch-22, because now I'm hidden from the people I would really like to connect with," she says.

Lauren Auster-Gussman, a freshman at Juniata College in Pennsylvania, says it's particularly awkward when one of her parents' friends asks to join her social network. She thinks Facebook should only be used by people younger than, say, 40.

"I mean, I'm in college," she says. "There are bound to be at least a few drunken pictures of me on Facebook, and I don't need my parents' friends seeing them."

There are ways around the problem.

It's possible on some sites, for instance, to limit what someone can see on your profile, though some users think it's a pain to have to deal with that.

"That is the beauty of Facebook and other online social networks. If you want to only interact with your peers, then you can adjust the settings to only allow that," says Katie Jones, a senior at Ohio Wesleyan University, who has studied ways prospective students use Facebook to connect students at colleges and universities they're interested in attending.

It's also possible to simply decline or ignore an adult's request to be an online friend. Or adults could back off and only use social networking to contact their own peers.

HOW TO BLOCK 'EM

Want to keep Mom and Dad away from the revealing photos on your Facebook or MySpace page? Here are two methods:

THE EASY WAY: Just deny their friend requests. Problem solved. But if that doesn't fly...

A BIT MORE COMPLICATED: Set limits on what parts of your site they can access. If you can't figure out how to do it, ask a grown-up. They know all about that computer stuff.

Hold on or log off?

But it's not always so easy to relinquish that control, especially for parents of teens, says Kathryn Montgomery, the author of "Generation Digital: Polities, Commerce and Childhood in the Age of the Internet" and mother of a 14-year-old.

"As parents, we have to figure out where to draw the line between encouraging and allowing our teens to have autonomy, to experience their separate culture, and when we need to monitor their use of media," says Montgomery, a professor of communication at American University.

She says it's especially important to help young people understand that social networking is often more public than they think.

Sue Prowefelt, 46, a mom in Flint, Mich., thinks it's less of an issue for parents who discover technology with — or even before — their children. Among other things, she has a blog, uses Twitter and has a Chumby, a personal Internet device that displays anything from news and weather to photos and eBay auctions.

Her children, ages 9 and 11, begged her to allow them to have a MySpace page because she does. Instead, she suggested Imee.com, a social networking site for kids that allows parental monitoring.

"I can't imagine my life without technology! It has truly become an extension of who I am and who my family will likely be," says Prowefelt, who works at a community college.

Still, in today's world, parents are finding that the urge to stake out technological turf is starting at a very young age.

Jennifer Abelson, a mom in New York, says her 2-year-old daughter asks every day if she can play on the "puter" on such kid-oriented sites as Noqui.com and Nickjr.com.

"She's constantly telling us 'I will do it!' and 'Go away!' if we try to interfere with her 'working,'" Abelson says.

"It's pretty amazing to see technology ingrained at such a young age. But I know she's learned so much from being able to use technology on her own."