CCHS Residents Bring OB Care to Pickens County

Former CCHS resident David Tuten, M.D., and Chief Resident Blaine Schilling, M.D., are bringing obstetrical care to rural Pickens County after a five-year gap in such services there. Dr. Tuten who completed his family practice residency in 1992, and Dr. Schilling, who is finishing an OB specialization at CCHS this spring, are family physicians who offer special care in obstetrics as well.

Their new practice has been supported and encouraged by the local doctors in Carrollton, the Pickens County Medical Center, public health officials, and the community. Both Schilling and Tuten say they felt they had found a place where they can practice medicine the way they always wanted to - as a true family doctor caring for the whole person and all the individuals in a family.

Schilling told Dr. Sam Gaskins, head of the CCHS family practice residency program, that he "didn't want to tell patients I can't be your doctor anymore because you're pregnant," and so he supplemented his family practice residency with an extra year of OB work. He said he sees distinct advantages for the small town practice because the parents don't have to find another doctor for the baby, and he can counsel the mother about care for herself and the baby both before and after birth during the same office visit.

Dr. Tuten had taken advanced OB to prepare for childbirth and gynecological emergency surgery procedures he would need as a Baptist missionary. He did some missionary work in Nigeria in 1989, and he and his family had planned to return to mission work after his residency. Dr. Schilling, who had done Baptist missionary work in Zimbabwe and El Salvador, was planning to go into practice somewhere in the South and do missionary trips. Both doctors are pleased with their arrangement in Pickens County. They can cover for each other at home and when the other is doing occasional work abroad. Tuten said the close ties to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) in Tuscaloosa they developed during their training create referrals for high risk situations they find now a smooth process.

Both Schilling and Tuten had worked in the emergency room at Pickens County Medical Center while they were residents at CCHS, and both had originally discounted the area as a practice site because of a lack of back-up. As they became friends and Tuten's plans for missionary work did not work out, they realized that a partnership could solve that problem. When Dr. Robert Sheppard (a local internist and cardiologist who had recruited him two years ago on behalf of the medical community) renewed the offer, Tuten agreed to set up a practice there if Schilling would be his partner. "It was an 'I'll sign if you'll sign' agreement," said Schilling. "Of course, the hunting trips that David took and still enjoys with Bob Sheppard helped make up his mind!"

Tuten said that the Sunday afternoon he and his wife went to visit Carrollton to look around and decide whether to go there, they stopped and picked up a newspaper. The headline proclaimed that Pickens County had one of the highest infant mortality rates in the state. He said that really influenced his decision because he wanted to go where he was needed and the need was obviously there. Schilling, who is from Texarkana, Texas, and his wife, who grew up in a small town, liked the atmosphere and felt at home on their sightseeing visit. Both Schilling and Tuten bought houses and have settled into the community joining the church and participating in local school activities.

"Just finding a doctor who wants to come to a rural area is not enough," said Dr. Bill Curry, a member of the hospital board. He worked with public health officials Mary Jo Looser and Will Denton to help Schilling and Tuten arrange for Medicaid reimbursement for OB care for eligible women in Pickens County.

The health department handles the administrative portion of Medicaid and the WIC nutrition program and sets up transportation to appointments. This was one important piece of a complex pattern of support necessary to set up a new practice. "Forging an alliance between our practice and public health solved the Medicaid problem," says Schilling, "and that was a key to getting set up."

"One thing that made this successful," said Dr. Robert Sheppard, "was that doctors recruited doctors. Doctors do not always welcome new doctors because it upset the status quo, but in this case we had the support of the medical community."

The hospital also provides a great deal of support for the new practice. Pickens County Medical Center, the local hospital, has renovated Labor and Delivery and the nursery and purchased state-of-the-art equipment for use in OB care.

Bill Lang, Administrator of the hospital, said that long range strategic planning by the hospital board had identified OB care as the country's #1 priority in 1989. The hospital provides financial support and incentives for the practice. As the practice grows and becomes self-sustaining, this support will decline. Tuten already sees private patients and expects to see more as the community comes to know him and Schilling, who will join him full time this summer.

"We're here to stay," says Schilling, and as the town realizes this, our practice will grow. I want to look around this town in a few years and say, 'I delivered her...and her mother!'"

-Linda Jackson
DEAN’S MESSAGE

National AAMC Themes Reflect CCHS Strengths

The theme for the 1992 Association of American Medical Colleges Annual Meeting held in New Orleans in November was “Health Care Reform: Academic Mission and Public Need.” Robert Petersdorf, M.D., AAMC President, noted “the conduct of basic and clinical research, the transfer of new knowledge and experimental technologies from the laboratory to the bedside, the provision of specialized tertiary services, and the treatment of the disproportionate share of our country’s poorest and sickest.”

In a number of important ways this annual meeting of the AAMC reflected Dr. Petersdorf’s comments. Much attention was paid to various strategies which would increase the number of generalist physicians produced by our medical schools. Attention was also focused on the need for new and better approaches to rural health care. And, while it has been a topic for the last decade, problem-based learning is now much closer to the center stage at AAMC meetings than has ever before been the case. The University School of Medicine ought to be pleased with the attention that is being focused on these three crucial areas. Certainly we are well positioned by virtue of mission and by our medical schools. Attention was also paid to various strategies which would increase the number of generalist physicians produced by our medical schools.

Dr. Roland Ficken
Dean, CCHS

CCHS hosted a special guest in November when Dr. Robert Hingson, M.D., a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, visited the Capstone. Dr. Hingson, a 1955 UA graduate who did his first two years of medical study here when the University housed a two-year medical school, invented the jet inoculation gun which gives intramuscular shots without needles. An anesthesiologist, he also developed the technique for administering epidural analgesia to give women pain relief during childbirth.

Dr. Hingson, who finished medical school at Emory, served an externship at Druid City Hospital. He said he “did everything from scrubbing floors to testing blood” at DCH, and he has fond memories of his years in Tuscaloosa and the people who helped him to work his way through school here. He will return to Tuscaloosa in April to give a lecture and be honored during Health Heritage Week at CCHS. (See related article below.)

Hingson said that treating a patient who had oil accidentally injected into his hand when a pipe burst gave him the idea for injecting medicine into the skin without a needle. A maritime laborer came to him with a swollen hand and no visible puncture. He made a surgical incision which released hydraulic fluid from beneath the skin. He then worked with the engineer husband of his nurse to refine and develop a process for purposely and painlessly injecting fluids into the skin without needles. He is convinced that this method will be critical in inoculating the world’s population against AIDS as soon as a vaccine is developed. Hingson says one in five cases of AIDS infection today can be traced to needles, and he is anxious to put in place a plan for mass inoculations for AIDS, hepatitis, and tuberculosis, a disease which has recently reappeared as a public health threat.

While visiting with CCHS faculty and residents, Dr. Hingson toured the Capstone Medical Center and the UA Educational Tower at DCH. He and Mrs. Hingson also had lunch with President and Mrs. Sayers and met with Dean Ficken and members of the CCHS Development team, which is seeking to endow Chairs of Family Medicine and OB/GYN. Mrs. Camille Elebash, a CCHS supporter and Board member of the Capstone Health Services Foundation, hosted a small reception for the Hingsons before they returned to their home in Ocilla, Georgia.

Dr. Hingson Visits CCHS

UA Graduate and Nobel Peace Nominee Returns

Russ Anderson, M.D., (left) Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, looks at the jet inoculation gun invented by Dr. Robert Hingson, a UA alum, as Dr. Hingson explains how it works.

CME Features Health Heritage Week and Endocrinology Emphasis Week

Continuing Medical Education noon conference lectures and two CME special emphasis weeks are being planned by the Continuing Education Committee of CCHS. Health Heritage Week, April 12-16, 1993 will feature speakers and topics which highlight Alabama medical pioneers or outstanding health care accomplishments. Dr. Robert Hingson, inventor of the jet inoculation gun, will be one of the speakers during the week.

Endocrinology Emphasis Week, February 12-19, 1993, will explore basic clinical problems facing internists and family doctors. Dr. William Winternitz, CCHS Professor of Internal Medicine, who is coordinating the week, says speakers will discuss adrenal insufficiency (Dr. Keith Delbell, CCHS), asymptomatic hyperthyroidism (Dr. Alan Siegal, UAB), treatment of hyperparathyroidism (Winternitz), and pediatric diabetes (Dr. Jocelyn Ashton, UAB).

Other CME topics scheduled include autopsyies, organ donations, asthma, electrical injuries, drug-induced vasculitis, unruptured infection, and acute renal failure. Lectures by Risa Webb, M.D., an epidemic intelligence service officer assigned to Alabama by the Centers for Disease Control, and Dr. Tom Malone of Emory are scheduled for May, 1993.

The Continuing Medical Education Committee works with all departments of CCHS to organize noon conferences; identifies problems experienced by health professionals in rural communities toward which the support of faculty, extramural resources, and programs can be identified and mobilized; develops policies and procedures for the provision of CME programs, both in Tuscaloosa and remote sites; consults on continuing education programs which are sponsored jointly by the College and other health care agencies or institutions; and defines goals, reviews progress, and coordinates College outreach activities in general.

Members of the CME Committee for 1992-93 are: Lorin A. Baumhover, Ph.D., Chairperson; William Dressler, Ph.D., Michael Taylor, M.D., Robert Ireland, M.D., Pamela Parker, M.D., Lee Thomas, M.D., William Winternitz, M.D., Cindy Redmond, M.D., Carl Brutskierwicz, M.D. (R.S.), Russell L. Anderson, M.D., Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, (ex-officio), and Antoinette Pierce, Coordinator CME, (ex-officio).

On Rounds • 2
PreMed Students to Visit CCHS

On April 23, 1995, pre-medical students from colleges and universities across the state will visit the College of Community Health Sciences at the University of Alabama. The event gives students a chance to learn more about this clinical campus of the University of Alabama School of Medicine. The invitation is issued through pre-med advisors on campuses at public and private institutions all over Alabama, and CCHS hosted a reception for members of the state association of health education advisors at their meeting in Tuscaloosa last October. The 15-minute video about CCHS shown at the reception is available for use with students or faculty.

The agenda for Pre-Med Day in April includes a welcome and introductions by Dr. Roland Ficken, Dean of CCHS, and overviews of the medical school program by Russell Anderson, M.D., Associate Dean, and Paul Tietze, M.D., Director of Medical Student Affairs. Dr. George Hand, Director of Admissions for the UA School of Medicine will discuss the admissions process, and CCHS faculty members and students will talk about the clinical years and answer questions. There will be a luncheon and a tour of the hospital and Capstone Medical Center. For more information, contact: Patti Cannon, Coordinator of Academic Services, CCHS, Box 870378, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487. (205) 348-1383.

Consulting Service in Behavioral and Community Medicine Provides Help and Information

The Health Research Consulting Service (HRCS) in the Department of Behavioral and Community Medicine at CCHS has current statistical and data publications available to researchers and grant writers. HRCS was created by the College of Community Health Sciences to encourage and facilitate medical research and to promote interdisciplinary study of health issues. HRCS assists in identifying funding sources and preparing grant proposals.

Consultation and technical assistance can be offered in research design, data analysis, preparation of proposals, and data entry. Staff can also help with medical record extractions and identification of potential publishers. Consulting services are also available for investigators outside the UA community, and HRCS can assist in locating needed personnel for research projects.

Behavioral and Community Medicine faculty members consult on behavioral science, biostatistics, community health issues, epidemiology, family systems, gerontology, health services, medical anthropology and medical sociology, preventive medicine, and rural health. The following resources are available:

Healthy People 2000: National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives

The full report and the summary report outline a national strategy for improving the health of the nation through the prevention of major chronic illnesses, injuries, and infectious disease.

Healthy Communities 2000: Model Standards

This text addresses the objectives spelled out in Healthy People 2000 and serves as a guide for action by state and local communities to use when planning community public health services.

Alabama: The Starting Point

This document outlines baselines established for the State of Alabama on each of the Year 2000 Health Objectives.

1991 Alabama Vital Events

This data book contains population-based information for the state on births, deaths, county profiles, and marriage/divorce indices. There are also earlier versions on file.

Alabama County Data Book 1990-91

This text profiles each county on a variety of information including government, education, transportation, communication and utilities, natural resources, recreation and culture, public safety, health services, social services, economics, housing, population, income, and municipal data.

Other resources materials on health promotion, health behavior, women's health, and 1990 census information are also available.

If you would like to use any of these resource materials, contact: Dr. Chris Nagy, Director, Health Research Consulting Service, 372 Nott Hall, (205) 348-1302, or write HRCS, Box 870326, Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0326.

Health Sciences Library Serves CCHS and Medical Community

The Health Sciences Library (HSL) in the College of Community Health Sciences is a resource library for all West Alabama health professionals.

It is located on the ground floor of the Educational Tower of DCH Regional Medical Center. The library hours are: Monday-Thursday 8:00am - 10:00pm; Friday 8:00am - 5:00pm; and Sunday 2:00pm - 10:00pm.

The library has 8,000 books, 475 current journal subscriptions, and about 10,000 bound journal volumes with an emphasis on primary care and clinical medicine. The collection includes selected specialty textbooks, journals, and a subscription to the Network for Continuing Medical Education videocassettes. Index Medicus and other printed indexes are available. The library participates in the University Libraries online card catalog, AMELLA. Two photocopy machines (One coin-operated and the other copiercard) are located in the library. The cost of copying on either machine is 5¢ per copy.

The reference staff can perform literature searches, fax journal articles, and obtain interlibrary loans for a fee.

For more information on outreach services or materials available, contact: Lisa Russell, Chief Medical Librarian, at (205) 348-1360.
Dr. Heilefinger

Lack of health insurance is the most significant barrier to access to health care in our country! Out of the more than 30 million Americans without health insurance, a disproportionate number are women and children. Contrary to popular belief, the typical uninsured of both sexes is white, not black. In the United States, there is a lack of health insurance for women and children. The problem is that 33 percent of the uninsured population is children under the age of 18. That is, 11.6 million children in this country have no health insurance. What is tragic about these numbers is the fact that 33 percent of the uninsured population is children under the age of 18. That is, 11.6 million children in this country have no health insurance. Add to that number 25 percent, 8.5 million children, between 18 and 24 years old, that lack health insurance.

Let me just review a few of the unhealthy facts with regard to children in this country.

The percentage of fully immunized two-year-olds is decreasing. One in four children is not immunized against diseases including measles, whooping cough, mumps and polio. Breaks of these preventable diseases are increasing, and you have heard of some of these on college campuses in the past year, to include Auburn University.

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One of every four pregnant women is not insured for maternity care and an equal percentage did not receive any prenatal care during the first trimester.

The United States surpasses almost all developed nations in adolescent pregnancy, school failure, adolescent suicide, homicide, and sexually transmitted diseases.

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The United States ranks 21st among industrialized nations in infant mortality. For black children, the U.S. ranks far lower. In Alabama, black infant mortality is twice as high as Caucasian. Each year, forty thousand babies born in America die before their first birthday. These deaths can be prevented through making available basic prenatal care to all pregnant women.

Unfortunately, things do not get much better for American children once they are born. Nearly 20 percent of all children have not been to see a doctor in the past year. This means these children are not receiving their basic immunizations. It also means that minor conditions which could become major may go undetected and untreated. While this may seem unimportant, it is not. An ear infection untreated can result in a significant deafness of hearing, and even later in life, require a hearing aid which could have been prevented by a timely visit, not to mention the loss of learning, social discomfort and inconvenience the individual should not have to bear.

On Rounds • 4

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Needs of Children

Medicaid dollars currently expended for children and pregnant women to the new state-administered insurance fund. There will be uniform benefits to cover all areas of health care. There will be freedom of choice. Patients can choose the provider and insurance plans that best fit their needs.

Shared funding - Employers will provide an insurance package for dependents and pregnant employees or pay a 3.17 percent tax. There will be cost sharing including deductibles and co-insurance. These are very modest, particularly for families with income between 135 percent and over 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Preventive health care will not require any cost sharing. The Academy's proposal will be user friendly. There will be reduction as much as possible in paper work which serves as a road block now. Payment systems and explanation of benefits will be uncomplicated and uniform. A fair compensation will be set up and physicians should be able to devote appropriate time to the diagnosis and management of all health care problems.

THE CHALLENGE: For 60 years pediatricians have fought fiercely to develop and protect programs for children. The Academy has never wavered from the dedication and commitment of its members and staff toward the development of a national policy that finally places our children first. There are 40 thousand Academy members who are working to insure that children's needs are met at every level. You will hear many other health care proposals placed forward in the months ahead. This is not to say that other segments of our society do not have health care problems. But children and pregnant women have been disproportionately neglected in the past. In the words of Senators George Mitchell and Robert Dole on the Senate floor (April 11, 1989), "as the leadership of this great body, we sense an emerging sentiment that it is time to make a promise to our most precious resource. As human beings, children matter in their own rights and as future contributing citizens, leaders, consumers, employers, and tax payers they deserve the best that we can offer to them. We must all commit ourselves to this end."

-David C. Hefelfinger, M.D.

Overview of HR 3393
"The Children and Pregnant Women's Health Insurance Act of 1991"

Our goal of ensuring access to quality care will be met by creating, through federal legislation, a mechanism to:
1. Build on and improve the existing employer-based system providing health insurance to employees and their dependents.
2. Develop, for children and pregnant women without employer-based insurance, a parallel system providing private health insurance through a state administered fund.
3. Rechannel into the state fund Federal and State monies for children and pregnant women served by the Medicaid program.
4. Allow maximum flexibility at the state level for program administration, within guidelines established at the federal level.
5. Utilize existing health care delivery models with procedures that are simple and easy to use for both the provider and patient.

American Academy of Pediatrics
1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Suite 721 North
Washington, D.C. 20004-1703

Badger Joins Knopke on Children's Trust Fund Advisory Committee

Dr. Lee Badger, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at CCHS has been appointed to serve on the Advisory Committee for the Children's Trust Fund of Alabama. She will serve as an at-large member. Dr. Harry Knopke, Professor of Behavioral Sciences in CCHS and Vice President for Student Affairs at UA, is also a member of the Advisory Committee representing the seventh congressional district.

Alabama's Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention agency, the Children's Trust Fund, was created by the Alabama Legislature in August, 1985, to allow for the funding of prevention programs each year and for the establishment of a self-sustaining source of funding for prevention programs in the future. The Children's Trust Fund (CTF) is devoted to eliminating child abuse and neglect through the funding of community-based prevention programs.

The CTF is governed by the Alabama Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board. The fourteen-member board is made up of nine public members appointed for three-year terms by the Governor and five permanent member who are heads of State Departments. The Board of Directors oversees the awarding of grant funds to community-based education and service programs that are focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect. There are local councils established in each of the seven congressional districts that have the responsibility of approving the grant applications from their area that should be considered by the CTF Board.

To date, the CTF has gone through nine funding cycles, awarding 322 grants for a total of $2,967,054.61. Grants fund prevention programs that utilize volunteers and provide neighborhood based, grass roots, person to person support. In compliance with the CTF law, all grants must have a minimum of 50% match in local funds and in-kind services. CTF funds are further maximized through a federal grant that matches state and private dollars.

Among the programs funded by the Children's Trust Fund are safety awareness programs conducted in schools that teach the students how to be safe, protect themselves, and who to turn to for help. Also funded are parenting skills programs for parents; home visitation programs for new parents; support programs and parenting skills classes for "high risk" parents; public awareness programs designed to increase the public's sensitivity to the problem of child abuse; and training programs for child care professionals. All programs receive not only funds but guidance and assistance in developing and maintaining local programs, information on up-to-date research in the prevention field, current curriculum information, and new innovative approaches to solving the problem of abuse from the CTF.

A continuous public awareness campaign is conducted by the CTF to educate Alabama citizens about the possibilities and need for prevention efforts. Billboards, statement inserts, public service announcements, meetings, speeches, and personal correspondence are used to heighten the public's awareness. CTF brochures and quarterly newsletters are also distributed across the state. The Children's Trust Fund conducts annual conferences and training to educate professionals and lay citizens concerning child abuse and neglect prevention. Dr. Badger has been helping to develop a series of sexual abuse alerts for public service announcements.
Profiles

On Rounds in this issue continues profiles of CCHS capital campaign steering committees. These volunteers are working to raise $6 million to endow permanent chairs and professorships at the College of Public Health.

STEERING COMMITTEE (current as of November 10, 1982)

Dr. Gundy

Howard Gundy

On Rounds

Victor Poole

Victor Poole has a basic philosophy: "take care of the children and look out for the old folks." He has a philosophy that shaped not only his career in banking (he is Chief Executive Officer of the Bank of Moundville) but especially his public service at home and at the state level as a member of the State School Board since 1963. He was appointed to the Board by three Alabama governors and has been elected for seven terms since 1970 when he was first elected to the elective office by a constitutional change. He represents District 7 which covers most of north Alabama from North Hale county to the Tennessee line.

Local projects and citizens depend on him. He can hardly get away for lunch at "Miss Melissa's" Cafe because of the people who call for advice or drop in to see him. On the Friday he was interviewed for this article, the Bank of Moundville was decorated with black and gold streamers for that night's football game, where he always sells programs for Hale County High School. "After my boys finished school, they kept the job open for me," he said of the local high school where he hired him, "I have the people that come to help, says a local businessman. "He takes a personal interest in the needs of the people here."

"If a child or a senior has a problem, I've got a problem," says Poole. He turns to a staff member with a question and tells her which loan period and interest rate she should use for that customer, then returns to his discussion of service for children and the elderly. He chairs the Golden Years Organization in Hale County which oversees fifty funded nutrition and transportation programs for senior citizens and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). He is also a member of the Black Warrior Council of the Boy Scouts, is coordinator of a Boy Scout troop at the Moundville Methodist Church, and is active with the Shrine Four Square Masonic Lodge, raising money for Shriners hospitals to provide charity care to children with severe burns or orthopaedic problems.

He is naturally to look upon his education. His mother was a teacher, and his father had great respect for education, he says. His wife, now president of the Bank of Moundville, is a retired teacher, and he says of Mrs. Poole, "once a teacher, always a teacher at heart." Of his service on the school board, he says, "I think a school board member has more opportunities to impact education than a governor, and his influence on education, kindergarten through junior college level, has been far reaching.

Containing health care costs and placing doctors in rural areas are his primary interests in helping the College of Community Health Sciences (CCHS) raise funds to improve physician training programs at the University of Alabama School of Medicine’s Tuscaloosa Program. He first became interested in medical education when he was recruited to chair a statewide committee in the early 70's to form CCHS during Dr. David Mathews tenure as President of the University of Alabama. He remembers Dr. Mathews asking him to show farmland to Dr. William Willard, a nationally renowned expert on medical education for rural physicians, what he calls "catfish farming."

He found him a farm and took him to see Governor George Wallace who convinced him to come to Alabama.

He worked with Dr. Willard, who became the first dean of CCHS, to organize grass roots support for training family physicians who would practice in rural settings. He called himself Willard's "errand boy" in those early efforts. Looking back at the early work in Alabama to spread medical education programs into more of the state, he says that the "rural vs. city mentality often hides the fact that the missions and objectives of both are closer together than we care to think." Poole was born in Greene County, served in the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division as a platoon sergeant, and has been at the Bank of Moundville since 1955. He married his high school sweetheart, and they have three grown sons and two granddaughters.

Earl Robertson

As a twelve-year-old boy growing up in Breaton, Alabama, Dr. Earl Robertson already knew he wanted to be a veterinarian like his uncle. He began his own family practice in Huntsville where he has lived since 1956. He likes caring for all members of a family, he

see Profiles, page 7
Dr. Robertson has always loved medicine. He delivered the baby who is now his office nurse. He gave up obstetrics when insurance premiums climbed to $45,000 per year, but he really misses that link to the families he cares for. Dr. Robertson also enjoy golf, visits with their two children and three grandchildren, and travel. They have cruised in Scandinavia and the Old South, "but the Legacy of Bear Bryant," Another session is currently being planned for September 24-25, 1993. Topics are "A Glimpse of the Old South," "Japan: Our Partner and Competitor," and "Sketchbook-Drawing: Creating Personal Visual Diaries." For more information, contact Linda Jackson, Elderhostel coordinator, at (205) 348-1350.

Publications: The Center disseminates information on issues relevant to the elderly through articles in professional journals and poster presentations at regional and national conferences, and addresses to professional and service organizations. For more information, contact Dr. Lorin Baumber, Director of the Center for the Study of Aging, or John Gillum, Research Assistant, at (205) 348-1545.

Informal Conferences Bring Residents and Communities Together

Family Medicine Residents who wish to explore practice opportunities in rural communities and community representatives have been meeting over a nice evening meal with an interesting topic to discuss as part of the Family Practice Rural Health Conference Program of the University of Alabama School of Medicine (UASOM). Residents and rural folks are meeting on campus in Tuscaloosa, Huntsville, and Birmingham to discuss such topics as industrial medicine, killer bees, and legal aspects of practice.

"Close contacts as far away as Andalusia and as near as Centerville have participated in discussions at Tuscaloosa and report satisfaction with the program. Jim Mason and Byron Lowry, Hospital Administrators in Scottsboro and Tallassee, respectively, see these conferences as evidence of UAH and UAB interest in rural Alabama," said Dr. John Wheat of CCHS, who helped develop the program.

John R. Wheat, M.D., Assistant Professor at CCHS, is principal investigator on the program working with Jerry Mc Knight, M.D., in Tuscaloosa, Louisia. It was one of the few residents available for family physicians in 1995, he said. Wheat joined the program on the University of Alabama School of Medicine Admissions Committee for four years. He is pleased to see more emphasis on training for primary care doctors in medical education today. Family physicians, especially those in small towns, need to know more than other doctors because they have fewer specialists to help with diagnosis and treatment, he says. It is important to get "good, sharp teachers to prepare the best doctors possible," he thinks, and that is why he devotes time and energy to the CCHS capital campaign to raise funds for faculty chairs and continuing education. "I don't know what's in store for medicine," he says of the current managed care trend to curb health care costs, "but I believe family practice will continue to be a leading primary care specialty."
The desirability of a rigorous liberal-arts curriculum in pre-medical education has received increased attention in past years. Broad exposure to the humanities as well as the sciences is deemed appropriate and fitting for preparation to enter the field of medicine. The residency and the subsequent years of practice have received less attention with respect to the liberal arts and humanities, although this period is important and second only to that of pre-medical and medical education. CCHS has responsibility for the final two years of clinical education of students of the University of Alabama School of Medicine. Following their second year, 25 students from the parent Birmingham program come to Tuscaloosa. In addition, CCHS is responsible for a large residency program in Family Medicine.

Noting an absence of the humanities from the post-graduate curriculum Elster and Christiansen from the University of Wisconsin in 1982 developed a series of lectures held at the Madison General Hospital to deal with non-medical topics of interest. The audience for their early-morning William Osler Lecture Series included residents and practicing physicians.

The appeal of the Madison concept led directly to the initiation of the "First Fridays" lunchtime programs at the College of Community Health Sciences (CCHS), the Tuscaloosa branch of The University of Alabama School of Medicine. The series title was chosen to indicate the scheduled days: the first Friday of each month during the academic year. Like the planners of the Wisconsin series, we lead of the Department of Family Medicine (CCHS), the Tuscaloosa Regional Medical Center, a modern 612-bed hospital, the largest medical center in western Alabama. One wing of the building, the Educational Tower, belongs to the University and contains the Willard Auditorium which seats 150. First Friday lectures are held in this auditorium.

Invitations are sent to an extensive list of people in the medical school, the hospital, and elsewhere on campus. Community physicians are also invited.

The series has continued monthly during the academic year since 1983. The reception of this unusual activity in the busy hospital routine of medical students, residents, physicians, has been quite gratifying, and indicates the value of the programs. Attendance has generally remained strong, as in Wisconsin, with at least 40-50 people per session, and usually more. The hospital auditorium has been the scene of concerts by pianists, woodwind quintets, and jazz bands; performances by dancers; lectures by philosophers, astronomers, and computer experts; and readings by poets. Clergymen, artists, professors, deans, and even the president of the University have participated as speakers, each offering valuable non-medical perspectives. In general, the series has been an exhilarating experience. Our series aims to provide education and intellectual stimulation for medical students, residents and practicing physicians. The emphasis is essentially non-medical. The series has served to introduce stimulating and excellent speakers who frequently are unknown to the medical school, even at the faculty level. Conversely, our small medical college and faculty are relatively unknown on the campus of the large university. As in other universities, the relationship between medicine and the rest of the campus is often distant. This separation is historic and resists efforts toward a united approach to the problems of humanity.

First Fridays have served to increase the awareness of the rest of the university of the presence of the medical school and its active involvement in education as well as in health care. The program has been enthusiastically supported by university administrators, including the dean of the medical school and the university president.

First Fridays have been a successful effort from varied points of view, and we plan to continue them in succeeding years. They are an enjoyable step towards the inclusion of the humanities in the medical curriculum—both before and after the M.D. award.

Note: The author recognizes the critical role played by Antoinette S. Pierce, Coordinator of External Affairs for CCHS, in the coordination of the programs in the series. For more information, call Ms. Pierce at (205) 348-1276.

First Friday Schedule

February 5, 1993  Malcolm Crawford, School of Music
March 5, 1993  Barbara Jameson, Ph.D., Religious Studies
April 3, 1993  Spring Break
May 7, 1993  TBA
June 4, 1993  Douglas E. Jones, Ph.D., College of Arts & Sciences