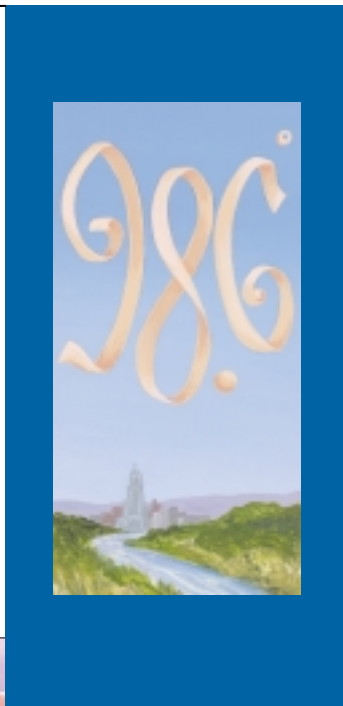


*People and programs
that keep the school
healthy and vibrant*



UPCI at Shadyside

GOING PUBLIC

ENTREPRENEURIAL MEDICINE

BY ERICA LLOYD

Let's run down that list of courses for the aspiring cellular biologist one more time: There's Membrane Trafficking, Integrative Physiology, and, oh, at some point along the way, make sure you take Competing in a Global Environment.

The rate of biomedical discovery today is so rapid, researchers might try to read a journal a day attempting to keep up. Officials at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute (UPCI) are hoping that Pitt scientists will add a few less conventional subjects to their continuing education endeavors—and become versed in areas like teamwork and strategic management.

This year, a donation from businessman Scott Limbach made it possible for UPCI to establish a center to promote medical entrepreneurialism at Pitt. The Scott Limbach Center for Medical Entrepreneurship is particularly focused on helping investigators move their innovations—novel therapies or diagnostic techniques, for example—from the lab to the marketplace. A program in the business school is one of the first to come out of the center. Its

coursework is tailored for junior faculty and trainees in the health sciences.

Limbach is a successful entrepreneur himself. So when he heard about the need to expose physicians and researchers to business concepts to foster biotechnology products and spin-offs, it caught his attention. He sees the center one day supporting health sciences work throughout the University, as part of an

effort to spawn biotech economic development in western Pennsylvania.

A few strategic investments could yield handsome payoffs in advancing medical research, Limbach and other center organizers believe. They especially want to encourage talented young investigators who find it tough to get grants. (When their research is in the initial stages, it might be overlooked by agencies such as the National Institutes of Health.) The center plans to offer “preseed” funds for promising projects, to come from gifts such as Limbach's. After all, there are bound to be a few scientific blue chips in there somewhere. ■

DOGGED DOCTORING

O'LEARY'S SPIRITED EXAMPLE

BY MARK JACOBS

The turkey is carved, the stuffing scooped and waiting in a dish, but the phone rings, and Eugene F. O'Leary, MD '51, has to leave the Thanksgiving table to attend to yet another flu patient: There is an outbreak of influenza in western Pennsylvania. His daughter Linda O'Leary remembers having to eat her turkey by the telephone because it rang so often that day.

The son of a steelworker who lost his leg in a railroad accident, O'Leary grew up in Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania. (He would one day return to set up a general practice there and in nearby Monessen.) In 1943, he enrolled at Pitt but joined the army after his freshman year. He found himself on the Siegfried Line, where German shrapnel ripped into his leg, requiring

him to spend several months recovering in England before returning home and to Pitt. There he focused on finishing his undergraduate work and enrolling in the medical school.

O'Leary planned to specialize in cardiology—in fact, he interned with Michael DeBakey and Denton Cooley in Houston. Once he began his practice though, he found that the demands of family medicine absorbed his attention. He was known as a first-rate diagnostician and also delivered some 3,000 babies during the course of his career.

The doctor had a sly side as well, yet his designs were always for a worthy cause.

O'Leary would give a slight slap on a wrist to distract a fearful child from the needle he placed in the other arm. And for opening day of the 1954 baseball season, he and a friend flew the milk run to St. Louis to see his hero, hitting-sensation Stan Musial. They left late Monday night and arrived in the bleary early hours of Tuesday.

A tall tale woven around O'Leary being called to St. Louis to perform an important operation got them a room in a town of booked hotels. Then, somehow, they managed to spend Tuesday evening chumming with “The Man” himself. (O'Leary, obviously a spirited fan, thought nothing of flying back for just about every Panther football game during the several years he lived in La Jolla, California.)

Eugene O'Leary died in 1998; in his honor, his wife, Mary Lou O'Leary, recently established two endowments at the medical school in his name. One fund will be used for much-needed scholarships, the other for student recruitment and retention efforts.

O'Leary's memory persists in many ways besides those generous gifts. Not too long ago, Chaney Rockwell, the doctor's four-year-old great-grandson, quizzed Mary Lou O'Leary on the difference between a compound and a mixture. When she asked whether he knew, he smiled slightly and said, with signature O'Leary determination, “Yes, but you tell me first.” ■



Eugene O'Leary holds Linda O'Leary

COURTESY MARY LOU O'LEARY