ON THE BEAT

Cardiologists on the Move

Dr. Roberta G. Williams is stepping down as chair of pediatrics at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Keck School of Medicine and will begin a yearlong sabbatical at the university April 1 to study the economics of life cycle coverage for patients with chronic childhood illnesses.

"I guess this is delayed gratification," the pediatric cardiologist told CARDIOLOGY NEWS, citing her decades-long interest in the economics of health care delivery for patients with congenital heart disease.

Dr. Williams, who is also vice president for pediatrics and academic affairs at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, said she will "turn over the reins" to **Dr. D. Brent Polk**, a researcher and pediatric gastroenterologist at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn.

Dr. Polk will succeed her as chair of both pediatric departments, and as vice president of academic affairs at Childrens Hospital.

Dr. Williams will be joined in her sabbatical by Dana P. Goldman, Ph.D., director of the Leonard D. Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics at the University of Southern California, and Darius N. Lakdawalla, Ph.D., associate professor at USC's School of Policy, Planning, and Development.

In addition to her interest in health policy, Dr. Williams has been involved in the field of echocardiography since the early 1970s, when she received pediatric cardiology training during a fellowship at Boston Children's Hospital. She went on to direct the hospital's echocardiography lab and became medical director of its cardiothoracic intensive care service. From there, she became chief of pediatric cardiology at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1995, she returned to her alma mater, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (where she had received her medical degree in 1968), to chair the pediatrics department. She joined USC in 2000.

The author of two books on echocardiography, Dr. Williams received the Gifted Teacher Award from the American College of Cardiology in 2002, and has been recognized by the Society of Pediatric Echocardiography for lifetime achievement.

Grants Focus on Wellness, Smoker 'Quitlines'

The federal government has granted states and territories $119 million to reduce tobacco use, increase physical activity, and fight obesity, the Health and Human Services department announced.

The grants are funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, also known as the stimulus package.

The money will go to programs aimed at prevention and wellness, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said at a press conference.

"Prevention is a 'best buy' for health," Dr. Thomas Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said at the conference. The CDC will help states implement the grants.

The awards were made in three major categories: policy and environmental changes; innovative programs; and tobacco cessation/telephone-based "quitlines." All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico will receive funding to expand quitlines.

The 'quitlines' are 'highly cost effective.' Most smokers want to quit, but haven't found the right program.

DR. FRIEDEN

Dr. Frieden called the lines "highly cost effective," noting that tobacco-related disease is the No. 1 cause of preventable death, and that two-thirds of smokers want to quit, but haven't found the right motivation or program.

Innovative programs in 13 states will receive money for 15 projects. Among those states, Mississippi will receive $3 million to fund a statewide smoke-free air policy and Rhode Island will receive $3 million to fund a program to help elderly residents age at home. These programs will likely serve as models for other states, said Ms. Sebelius.

For details, visit www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/recovery.

—Alicia Ault

Dr. Christopher U. Cates, an interventional cardiologist in Blairsville, Ga., has entered the race for the Republican nomination for Georgia's ninth Congressional district. Dr. Cates, who has run weekly clinics in Hiawassee, Blairsville, and Dahlonega, Ga., for 21 years, has closed his practice to run his political campaign.

He has been involved in the health care policy debate for 20 years, having addressed federal agencies and members of Congress on issues such as cost-effectiveness and quality of care. Dr. Cates, 53, is a graduate of the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta. He completed his residency and cardiology fellowship training at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn. In 1995, he became the first physician to perform a carotid stent procedure in Georgia. In 2005, Dr. Cates performed the first mission rehearsal procedure in medical practice, using virtual reality simulation.

Dr. Robert Mentzer Jr., a cardiovascular transplant surgeon, has joined San Diego State University's BioScience Center, where he now serves as a research professor in the biology department.

Dr. Mentzer, who resigned last summer from his position as dean of Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit, will serve as director of translational research and global health initiatives. He will also fill the role of senior adviser to the San Diego State University Research Foundation.

In his position as director of translational research, Dr. Mentzer will guide the BioScience Center in bringing study findings into medical practice.

—Jane Locastro

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