Converted lab helps train local physicians

The School of Medicine recently welcomed a new facility, the Advanced Surgical Training Lab, which was converted from the old David Melarkey Anatomy Lab on the University of Nevada, Reno campus.

With generous help from the William N. Pennington Foundation, the new training lab allows local surgeons to practice new procedures and technology on donated cadavers.

Carl Sievert, professor of physiology and cell biology and head anatomy instructor at the medical school, spearheaded the conversion of the surgical training lab, which is designed to hold three surgical stations, but can easily expand to allow up to six.

“I have been extremely impressed with the quality of the lab. During my surgical training sessions, we had access to surgical assistants as well as radiographic fluoroscopy, just as we have in the actual operating room,” explained Mike Kalisvaart, a local orthopedic surgeon.

With its convenient location in northern Nevada, the Advanced Surgical Training Lab allows for doctors to come in on their own time to practice procedures, rather than having to travel to the next closest one at the University of California, Davis.

“This lab allows doctors to obtain the training they want that they otherwise may not have received,” explained Sievert.

Obstetrician-gynecologist Elizabeth Hutson agrees with Sievert. “I live and work in Reno, so having this right here is so convenient and allows me to participate in educational and teaching opportunities that I would otherwise not be able to have due to the need to travel and time away from work and home.”

The lab has been well received in the local medical community. “The location of the lab is outstanding. It places us in the midst of a thriving educational institution, and it is convenient with easy access to the major hospitals,” said bariatric surgeon Kent Sasse.

Sievert allows a number of medical students to participate in the training sessions in the lab, creating an atmosphere where professionals, students and administrators can train to provide the best health care to the community.

The training lab is currently running two labs a month with the hope of getting a sponsor to become a robotic surgical training center in the future.

To inquire more information on the advanced surgical training lab, contact lab manager Patricia Elder at pelder@unr.edu.

—David O. Perez ’15

Donated cadavers in the Advanced Surgical Training Lab are used to hone physician skills on new technologies and procedures.

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Anatomical Donation Program

The cadavers used in the training lab are from the School of Medicine’s Anatomical Donation Program (ADP), which allows people to donate their bodies to medical teaching and scientific research. The ADP is a statewide program that accepts donations from all over Nevada and portions of northern California.

“We keep most northern Nevada donor remains at the School of Medicine for medical education and research, and we also transfer some cadavers to the University’s biology department, Truckee Meadows Community College and Western Nevada College for student education. Donors from southern Nevada are distributed to southern NSHE institutions,” explained Joyce King, ADP administrator. For more information on the anatomical donation program, contact Joyce King ’02 at jaking@medicine.nevada.edu.
Office for Community Faculty

Another block has been set upon the foundation building toward a four-year medical school in Reno as the School of Medicine welcomes April Heiselt, the founding director of the newly-established Office for Community Faculty.

The primary role of the Office for Community Faculty and its director is to enhance relationships with community partners while continuously seeking out new relationships within the health care community, all with the goal of enhancing educational experiences.

“The School of Medicine has always relied on the talents and generosity of community physicians and other clinicians. As we move into a new phase of a four-year campus, we are taking our commitment to the community up a notch and launching this office to better meet the needs of our community faculty,” said Melissa Piasecki, executive associate dean for the School of Medicine and head of the Office of Academic Affairs, under which the Office for Community Faculty resides.

“The Office for Community Faculty will seek to enhance and support the way communities are including learners in their practice of medicine. My role includes building relationships with community faculty, department heads, rural physicians and preceptors to ensure that their voices are heard throughout the process. This is a team effort to better address the health care needs of Nevadans,” Heiselt said. “We have an outstanding team and I am looking forward to working together to accomplish our goals.”

The Office for Community Faculty and Heiselt serve as the primary contacts for community faculty members for the partnership between an individual physician or a group practice and the School of Medicine and act as a steward to maintain the relationship.

Thanks to the generosity of Renown Health and highlighting the recently signed partnership agreement between the University of Nevada and Renown Health, the Office for Community Faculty will open at the Renown Regional Medical Center campus in the Sierra Tower later this fall.

Max Coppes, Renown Health executive vice president and chief medical and academic officer, provides his perspective.

“This is another great example of the many ways Renown and the School of Medicine can work together to ultimately increase the number of physicians that will choose northern Nevada as their home. By providing medical students with memorable educational experiences, we greatly increase the likelihood that they will choose to stay here after they finish their medical training. This new space will become Renown Health’s focal point for medical education.”

“The office will serve all community faculty throughout northern Nevada from its location in Renown,” explained Piasecki. She went on to describe Heiselt’s role as akin to museum curator, by “curating the precious resource that is our community faculty.”

“April brings many years of experience from Mississippi State University in successfully developing the relationships between the university and community faculty. Her enthusiasm and creativity shine when she describes the potential impact of community faculty on our students and residents. Her combination of academic expertise and community-based experience will be a great boost to our new office,” Piasecki said.

Heiselt has a doctorate in philosophy in educational leadership and policy with an emphasis in higher education from the University of Utah. She recently served as director of the Center for the Advancement of Service-Learning Excellence at Mississippi State University.

She also served as associate professor in the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology at Mississippi State and faculty advisor for the Maroon Volunteer Center that planned and coordinated community service events for the university.

Please contact April at aheiselt@medicine.nevada.edu for more information.