

## Biochemistry, molecular biology gets new chair



**Ramesh Gupta, Ph.D.**, professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, has been named chair of the School's biochemistry and molecular biology department in Carbondale. He succeeds **Joe**

**Schmit, Ph.D.**, who has retired from the university.

Dr. Gupta joined SIU's faculty in 1984. He has served as director of SIUC's molecular biology, microbiology and biochemistry graduate program (2003-06). His research interests are molecular biology and archaea. He has published more than 45 journal articles and has received grants from the National Institutes of Health and the Office of Naval Research.

Dr. Gupta earned a doctoral degree in biology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1981). He earned a medical degree and diploma from the Council of Homeopathic Medicine in West Bengal, India (1972, 1964) and a master's in zoology and bachelor's with honors at Calcutta University, India (1969, 1967).

## Landecker Award given

**Sara Rubenacker** has received a monetary award from the Hildegard C. Landecker, M.D., Memorial Endowment Fund at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine. Rubenacker is the 25th recipient of the award, which is given annually to a freshman female medical student with high academic standing.

The Landecker fund was established in 1982 by Manfred Landecker, Ph.D., emeritus professor of political science at SIU Carbondale, in memory of his mother, who was a pediatrician.



## New Students at SIU Med School Participate in White Coat Ceremony

Seventy-five students in the Class of 2011 began their medical training by participating in a "white coat ceremony" in Carbondale in August, designed to establish a "psychological contract for professionalism and empathy" in medicine.

**Cynthia Thomas, M.D.**, assistant professor of family and community medicine in Springfield and a 1991 SIU graduate, was the keynote speaker. Dr. Thomas received the School's 2006 Humanism in Medicine Award.

**J. Kevin Dorsey, M.D., Ph.D.**, dean and provost and a 1978 graduate of the School, welcomed the students. **Debra L. Klamen, M.D.**, associate dean for education and curriculum, read the Hippocratic Oath.

Helping the medical students with their new coats were Alumni Society President **Sam Gaines, M.D.**, a Springfield internist, and a 1977 graduate, and **Wesley Robinson-McNeese, M.D.**, associate professor of internal medicine and medical humanities, executive assistant to the dean for diversity and a 1986 graduate. The class of 39 women and 36 men also received a pin with the words "Compassion, Respect and Integrity" from the SIU Foundation.

During the ceremony, the 2006-07 Mentor of the Year award was presented to **James O. Alexander, M.D.**, a family practitioner in Harrisburg and a 1988 graduate of the School. The Class of 2010 selected him for the honor at the end of their first year in Carbondale, in recognition of his work as a volunteer mentor to first-year medical students. The medical students nominating Alexander said, "He is a hard-working, good-natured, practical physician who makes the mentor clinical experience both educational and enjoyable. He taught me a lot about clinical interaction with patients, but he also went beyond and told me a lot about his experience as a physician."

## Dr. Ala named interim director of Alzheimer's Center



**Thomas A. Ala, M.D.**, associate professor of neurology, has been named interim director of SIU's Center for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders in

Springfield. He succeeds **Rodger J. Elble, M.D., Ph.D.**, professor of neurology, who continues as department chair.

Dr. Ala joined SIU's faculty in 1999. He is active in clinical and neuropathological research in Alzheimer's disease, dementia with Lewy bodies, vascular dementia and other dementing illnesses. He has four current clinical evaluations of new drugs underway at SIU and has completed 21 others.

He is board certified in psychiatry and neurology by the American Board of Psychiatry and of Neurology. He has published more than 75 journal articles and abstracts.

Dr. Ala completed a two-year Alzheimer's research fellowship at Regions Hospital (1987) and his neurology residency at the University of Minnesota (UM) (1985). He earned his medical degree at UM (1981) and bachelor's degree at Michigan Technological University (1970).

*For more information about In Brief, contact Nancy S. Zimmers, Public Affairs (nzimmers@siumed.edu) at 217-545-2155.*

## "Mom, my head hurts"

*How to treat children's headaches*



The pain that accompanies a child's headache is as real as it is for adults and not something to be dismissed as a child's imagination.

Headaches are on the rise in children, according to **Dr. Hossam H. Abdel-Salam**, assistant professor of neurology and pediatrics at SIU, who specializes in treating headaches in children.

Recent studies say headaches generally affect between 15 to 20 percent of children. "If the headache is strong enough to debilitate or affect the daily activities of a child or adolescent, then it is considered severe," says Dr. Abdel-Salam, one of the pediatric specialists recruited as a part of St. John's Children's Hospital, a joint endeavor of SIU and St. John's Hospital.

Children get the same types of headaches as adults. The three most common types are migraines, tension-type and chronic-type. Headaches often are caused by and occur with viral infections, such as a cold or the flu. Even playing in the sun or lack of sleep can cause headaches in children. Headaches can cause a child to miss school or interfere with studying and homework.

Frequent headaches could be a sign of an underlying illness. "If parents notice other symptoms accompanying the headaches, like morning vomiting or neurological symptoms, such as the

child is not walking properly or not running as fast, the child should see a physician as soon as possible," Dr. AbdelSalam says.

"If parents think they need to give their children pain medication more than once a week, they should see their physician," Dr. AbdelSalam advises. In very rare cases, headache is a symptom of a brain tumor, high blood pressure or some other serious problem, he cautions.

One suggestion to parents from the American Academy of Pediatrics ([www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)) is to keep a headache diary. Make notes of when headaches occur, how long they last, what the child was doing when the headaches started, what he or she had eaten, how much sleep they have had, and what makes the headache better or worse. Bringing the headache diary along to the doctor's visit may help.

For short-term headache treatments, over-the-counter acetaminophen and ibuprofen children's medicines are best. Pain medication should not become a crutch, however.

A physician can consider various treatments for severe headaches. Once the right treatment is discovered, it typically is prescribed for six months to a year.

Dr. AbdelSalam joined the SIU faculty in 2006 after completing a three-year fellowship in child neurology at Cleveland Clinic Foundation. He is certified by the American Board of Pediatrics. To contact him or schedule a consultation, call (217) 545-6950 or (800) 342-5748, weekdays.