



Rows of medical records will be replaced with the streamline computer system, demonstrated by Lauri F. Lopp, M.D., assistant professor of family and community medicine.

Health records going digital

An electronic health record (EHR) system is being implemented at the School of Medicine, first at SIU's Center for Family Medicine, located at Fourth and Carpenter streets in Springfield.

"Electronic health records are becoming the standard of care, so this conversion will help us become more service oriented, improving interaction with our patients, as well as provide better efficiencies for SIU's growing academic medical practice," said Richard Embrey, M.D., medical director for SIU P&S and associate professor of surgery. "This new electronic system will benefit our patients, physicians and staff as well as the medical students and residents that we train at SIU."

Using new hardware, including computers for 375 exam areas, the EHR system provides automatic interface among ap-

pointment scheduling, billing and dictation systems, laboratories, radiology reports and demographic information. In addition, the system interfaces with EHR systems at its two affiliated hospitals, Memorial Medical Center and St. John's Hospital.

The rest of SIU's seven clinical departments are in line to receive the streamlined system. Family medicine in Decatur, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, and general internal medicine will get the system in the next few months. All Decatur and Springfield sites will be converted by February 2009.

A 20-person SIU team, led by David Tkach, CEO for SIU P&S, and Sandy Walters, chief information officer for P&S, selected the GE Centricity product last year and continue overseeing the project.

Rural Health Initiative funds partnerships

Health care in Pike County will be getting better with the work of a new group: the Pike County Community Health Partnership (PCCHP). SIU School of Medicine's Rural Health Initiative presented the Illini Community Health Care Foundation (ICHCF) with a \$26,000 grant to fund the salary of the partnership director.

The unique partnership has been driven by a spirit of collaboration from all of Pike County's health organizations toward addressing the health needs of the county, which includes underserved and at-risk populations and diminishing state and federal funding resources. The partnership could serve as a model.

"We are deeply appreciative of the grant as well as the guidance provided by SIU, which also has played a primary role in the partnership's development. This grant enables the partnership, which has already shown unparalleled cooperation, to focus on finding solutions to the myriad of health issues facing Pike County's citizens by working with a collaborative mindset," said Patricia McIntosh, executive director of ICHCF.

Washington County Hospital (WCH) in Nashville received a grant of \$40,000 for new software to automate the hospital's billing process, which will enhance the hospital's operational effectiveness and improve the revenue cycle, which are goals of its strategic plan.

"We are very pleased with our partnership with SIU because this grant will help us focus on moving our business practices forward using improved technology," said Nancy Newby, WCH president and chief executive officer, during a press conference announcing the grant.

More than 90 RHI partnerships have been developed by SIU, according to John Record, assistant dean for rural and alumni affairs at SIU who coordinates the School's RHI program.

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

5 priorities for Illinois health care

The Joint Task Force on Rural Health and Medically Underserved Areas of the Illinois General Assembly announced its findings in February, identifying five major priorities for the 95th General Assembly to consider:

1. Resolving chronic Medicaid provider payment issues;
2. Increasing funding for programs and services authorized by the Rural/Downstate Health Act;
3. Increasing funding for local public health department grants for core programs and services;
4. Increasing telemedicine capabilities;
5. Boosting access to specialty and subspecialty care for underserved populations through a combination of more prompt payment, adjusted Medicaid reimbursement and incentives to specialty providers.

“By conducting public hearings throughout Illinois last year, we were able to hear concerns and study issues of importance to citizens, health-care providers, support organizations and all

who share the goal of improved access to quality and affordable health care for Illinois’ residents,” said State Sen. Deanna Demuzio, co-chair of the task force.

The task force, which included members from both the Illinois House of Representatives and Illinois Senate, was the number one recommendation of a 2003 Health Care Summit convened by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute in Carbondale and the School of Medicine.

“I believe these recommendations will help us all make substantive progress toward improving health care in the state,” said J. Kevin Dorsey, M.D., Ph.D., dean and provost of the School of Medicine. “I particularly applaud their recommendations on expanding the options for the practice of medicine using telemedicine technology. I appreciate the increase in the budget for the Rural/Downstate Health Act which includes SIU’s Rural Health Initiative.”

The full report may be found on the Illinois General Assembly Web site at www.ilga.gov/reports/specialreports.asp.



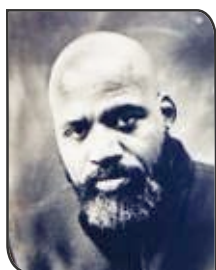
Dr. Nicolas sees patients in Effingham

Ramzi Nicolas, M.D., a specialist in pediatric and fetal cardiology, is now seeing patients on the third Tuesday of each month at St. Anthony’s Memorial Hospital in Effingham. Dr. Nicolas is an assistant professor of pediatrics at the medical school and one of the new pediatric specialists recruited as part of St. John’s Children’s Hospital (SJCH), a joint endeavor of SIU and St. John’s Hospital in Springfield. He serves as director of SJCH’s pediatric cardiology.

The pediatric cardiac services Dr. Nicolas provides at St. Anthony’s are part of the hospital’s Heart Care Services. Treatment options for children are comprehensive, including fetal echocardiography, holter and event monitors, and cardiac, medical and vascular sonography. Complex cases are referred to SJCH in Springfield.

Dr. Nicolas is board certified in pediatrics and pediatric cardiology by the American Board of Pediatrics and joined SIU in 2005. He also sees patients at St. Mary’s Hospital in Decatur once a month. He can be contacted through the SIU Call Center in Springfield, 217-545-8000 or 1-800-DIAL SIU (1-800-342-5748).

Race, sport and society discussed at lecture



A massive public health crisis is happening in the African-American community as doctors, nurses and athletic prospects are being buried, jailed and disqualified, said Harry Edwards, Ph.D., during the annual Black History Month event at the School of Medicine in February.

For the evening program in Springfield, Edwards discussed “The Crisis of Black Sports Participation and Popular Culture: Issues of Political Policy and Public Health.” An activist, athlete

and former professor at the University of California at Berkeley, Edwards became a spokesperson for a revolution in sports. He has been a pioneering scholar in the sociology of sports as an academic discipline and is a leading authority on developments at the interface of race, sport and society. A native of St. Louis and East St. Louis, Edwards called for a Black athlete boycott of the U.S. 1968 Olympic team.

The talk was organized by SIU’s chapter of the Student National Medical Association (SNMA). Audrey Tanksley, second-year medical student from Chicago, was this year’s chair for Black History Month. SNMA is composed of medical and premedical students focused on the needs of minority students across the nation.