

# SIU faculty honored as “Medical Innovators”

Six faculty from SIU School of Medicine were among ten medical professionals recognized during the Medical Innovators program held in March by the Sangamon County Medical Society and the Quantum Growth Partnership, in support of the Mid-Illinois Medical District (MIMD).

The Medical Innovators program showcased medical and scientific breakthroughs in an effort to educate business leaders and the local community about the MIMD and its growing stature as a center of medical excellence.

The ten innovators were selected for recognition by a peer review panel based upon review of their patent(s), success in obtaining national grant funding from agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, participation as the principal investigator in clinical research trials, and/or regional and national reputation in attracting patients to Springfield.

A publication, *Medical Innovators*, available through the Medical District, focuses on the advanced medical treatments and clinical trials currently taking place within the Medical District.



**Tom Ala, M.D.**, associate professor of neurology and interim director of SIU’s Center for Alzheimer Disease and Related Disorders



**Kathleen C.M. Campbell, Ph.D.**, professor of surgery and director of audiology research in SIU’s otolaryngology division



**John E. Godwin, M.D.**, professor of medicine, chief of oncology and associate director of SimmonsCooper Cancer Institute at SIU



**Robert B. McLafferty, M.D.**, professor in SIU’s vascular surgery division



**H. Dennis Mollman, M.D., Ph.D.**, associate professor of surgery and chair of the neurosurgery division



**Krishna A. Rao, M.D., Ph.D.**, assistant professor of internal medicine and a member of the SCCI research team

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## SIU Telehealth connects state’s health-care activities

Health-care providers and patients in more than 100 Illinois communities are now regularly connected to SIU thanks to the medical school’s large video conference effort.

SIU’s Telehealth Network and Programs, based in Springfield, links providers, including physicians, across the state for educational, clinical and administrative activities.

“Our goal is to bring the health-care resources to central and southern Illinois,” says **Deborah Seale**, executive director of SIU telehealth programs (pictured right).

The interactive network consists of computers, video cameras, monitors and related telecommunications equipment that provide the audio and visual communication link between SIU and downstate hospitals and other remote locations.

“A video conferencing system is installed at several SIU facilities in Springfield and Carbondale and 149 sites in 101 communities. The State’s Illinois Century Network provides the high-speed telecommunication lines for many of the locations,” explains Seale.

She and her staff of seven, including technical and program coordinators located at SIU, organize and operate the transmis-

sion of 46 ongoing weekly video-conference meetings, including about 20 educational conferences.

“The network enables health-care providers, educators and patients to come together, sometimes for the first time, to solve problems that they could not solve alone,” Seale says.

Physicians can keep up-to-date with current practices or consult on patient cases without taking significant time away from seeing their patients, she adds. The network also eliminates the need to travel for medical education.

Fifty hospitals in the Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network also use the network. “Working with the rural hospitals is one of our highest priorities,” Seale says.



SIU Telehealth

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## Suicide rising in teens

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among teens and preteens and the number seems to be increasing in recent years. About 90,000 teens worldwide commit suicide each year. About four million attempt suicide.

**Stephen Soltys, M.D.**, professor and chair of psychiatry at SIU School of Medicine in Springfield, explains that most teens who commit suicide are suffering from a biological depression that has not been diagnosed or treated. He says more females attempt suicide, but more males are likely to complete a suicide attempt.

"About 3½ percent of all teens have a severe major depression. About another 3½ percent will have a chronic long-lasting depression. When a stressor is added, teens see the situation as though their life is over or that they can't stand the loss of self-esteem any further, and they try to harm themselves," explains Soltys.

He adds that it is very important to recognize when a teen is depressed. The teen should seek treatment from a primary care physician or mental health counselor as soon as possible. The most effective treatment may include counseling or psychotherapy combined with medication.

## Memory and Aging network expands

Two new provider sites have joined the Memory and Aging Network at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine's Center for Alzheimer Disease and Related Disorders.

Gowin Parc in Mattoon and Northwest Psychiatric in Breese have joined the Springfield-based center.

"As the size of the aging population continues to grow, the need for health-care services also increases. The medical school's center is dedicated to assisting local providers in meeting the needs of Alzheimer's disease patients and their families and we welcome these additional partners," said Tom Ala, M.D., associate professor of neurology and interim director of the center.

Started in 1987, SIU's center serves 93 Illinois counties. Last year, more than 2,000 patients in the network received services.

The 31 sites provide a network of physicians, allied health professionals and nursing home staff members in down-

SIU Center for Alzheimer Disease  
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state Illinois who are trained to evaluate and recom-

mend treatment for patients and families who may be dealing with Alzheimer disease or related disorders.

SIU's own team includes physicians, neuropsychologists, a geriatrician and nurses who work with the provider sites so patients can receive treatment locally and avoid traveling to Springfield for evaluation.

The SIU faculty at the Alzheimer center also conducts research into areas such as age-related memory loss and hosts various national clinical trials. They provide continuing education, including discussion of new research findings and therapy options, to help local physicians and professionals better serve local communities.

In addition, the center offers comprehensive medical services to treat patients and counsel families.

## Vautrain named medical officer

**Robert L. Vautrain, M.D.**, has joined SIU School of Medicine as chief medical officer for SIU Physicians & Surgeons, the medical school's physician practice group, and an associate professor of general internal medicine. He is providing leadership in the areas of patient safety, clinical informatics, and standardization of care processes for SIU medical providers, with additional responsibility in areas of accreditation and regulatory compliance.



Most recently, Vautrain was a hospital administrator in San Francisco. He was chief medical officer at Memorial Health System in Springfield (1997-2007) and in private practice in Springfield for sixteen years (1981-97). He had served on the SIU voluntary faculty as a clinical assistant professor (1981-2007).

Vautrain completed a master's in administrative medicine at the University of Wisconsin (2000). He completed his medicine residency and earned his medical degree at the University of Rochester Medical Center (1981, 1978). He completed his bachelor's at the University of Texas at Austin (1970).

He is board certified in internal medicine by the American Board of Internal Medicine and a diplomate of the National Board of Medical Examiners.

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