‘Treat the patient’ is message to BCM graduating class

In this time of radical innovation in medicine, it is all the more important to “treat the patient.” Dr. Eric Topol, a leader in the field of advancing health care through technology, advised the graduating class of Baylor College of Medicine in May.

Topol, Director of the Scripps Translational Science Institute, spoke at the commencement ceremony for 203 graduates. Of those, 45 received doctoral degrees and 158 received medical degrees.

At the ceremony, four honorary degrees were presented—to Laura Arnold, Co-chair of the Laura and John Arnold Foundation; Morton Hyman, Rector of the University of Chicago; and Dr. Bruce Alberts, President, National Academy of Sciences; and Dr. Marjorie Whittingham, Director of the University of Texas Cancer Center.

School of Tropical Medicine launches first diploma course

The National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine made another step forward in its ongoing development of state of the art education programs with the launch of the Diploma in Tropical Medicine Course Friday, June 1.

Established last year and led by Dr. Peter Hotez, a renowned expert in tropical diseases, the school is the first national school of tropical medicine in the United States committed to addressing diseases of poverty by developing solutions for the world’s most pressing tropical disease issues globally. It will tackle this challenge on the policy, clinical, research and educational fronts.

Forty-two health care professionals enrolled in the diploma course, which marks the school’s first educational program. The 8-week diploma consists of four modules that are each two weeks long. Trainees will then have the opportunity of pursuing additional international field experience, which would qualify them for the certification exam offered by the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

The Inaugural Lecture of the Diploma in Tropical Medicine Course was held to commemorate the launch of the program. Hotez and other leaders from BCM and the National School of Tropical Medicine welcomed the diploma participants and lauded their commitment to improving health care for the world’s poorest people.

Dr. Alfredo F. J. Dajer, rector at the Universidad Autonoma de Yucatan, delivered the inaugural lecture. Earlier in the day, a memorandum of understanding for future collaborations between the Yucatan University and Baylor College of Medicine was signed.

Baylor College of Medicine first to offer space medicine track to medical students

Medical students who have an interest in space medicine can now take courses in the world’s first officially recognized space medicine track as they pursue their medical degree. The track consists of a set of electives offered at Baylor College of Medicine and is managed by BCM’s Center for Space Medicine.

This elective program gives future physicians knowledge about physiological, psychological and medical issues associated with space exploration and the practice of medicine in harsh, remote environments.

The BCM track includes four courses and an optional field trip to NASA’s Johnson Space Center.

The Center for Space Medicine is a one-of-a-kind academic center of excellence where faculty, students, residents and staff work together to discover, educate and push new frontiers of space biomedical research and education. It also has a focus on translating space advances to benefit health on Earth. The center has 47 members, including 20 BCM faculty members from eight departments, seven of whom have secondary academic appointments at the center. Its Director, Jeffrey Sutton, is Professor in the Department of Medicine and the center holds the Friedkin Chair for Research in Sensory System Integration and Space Medicine at BCM.

Reunion 2012

was a great success

To view photos of the events

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Chairman of the Board of the Sabin Vaccine Institute; Dr. Jacqueline Barton, Chair of the Division of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at the California Institute of Technology; and Topol.

Topol, author of “The Creative Destruction of Medicine,” a new book that outlines how the digital revolution will create better health care, noted the many changes in technology that improve the care of patients.

He presented examples to illustrate the state of medicine, including successful treatment through DNA analysis and genome sequencing, self-monitoring by patients through cell phone apps that provide significant amounts of information to the physician and his own story of not being able to reach his physician during a painful condition.

He recounted his experience to illustrate the continuing need for the personal touch, even in this digital medical era.

Also at the ceremony, Ashley Ramirez-Herrick spoke as a representative of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Amy Pearlman spoke on behalf of the medical school graduates.

Medical school graduate Joshua Liao recently wrote a piece on an important experience with one of his patients while at BCM. The story was published in The Lancet.

In addition to the approval of the space medicine track, the Center for Space Medicine enhanced its capabilities earlier this year with the official opening of the new 16,400-square-foot Consolidated Research Facility that it shares with the National Space Biomedical Research Institute. The facility includes office space, four laboratories, meeting rooms and science and education collaboration areas for students, center faculty and visiting researchers and physicians.

Ashley Herrick graduated from Baylor College of Medicine with her Ph.D. last month. Her personal journey with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma inspired her to pursue the field of cancer research. Herrick was diagnosed when she was a junior at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego and has been in remission for more than six years.

She is currently a clinical research program coordinator in the Department of Investigational Cancer Therapeutics at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, and her job involves assisting with regulatory aspects of phase I clinical trials for advanced stage cancer patients. Her focus at BCM was in molecular biology. While at BCM, Herrick was involved with the graduate student council, serving as both president and a representative and as a mentor to various student programs.

As a survivor of Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, Herrick sees the importance of giving back and does so by running marathons with Team in Training, the fundraising branch of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, to raise money for research and patient care. She also serves on the advisory board for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

Herrick was this year’s recipient of the Lehmann Outstanding Student Award.

More than 60 alumni and friends recently attended a BCM reception at the private gallery of a college donor in New York City. Pictured are Alumni Association President Dr. Robert Zurawin, BCM President and CEO Dr. Paul Klotman, and Dr. Stuart Bohrer.