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UF President J. Bernard Machen, D.D.S., Ph.D., joined David S. Guzick, M.D., Ph.D., senior vice president for health affairs and president of the UF&Shands Health System, and Michael Good, M.D., dean of the UF College of Medicine, in welcoming researchers from guest institutions.

The scientific program, which was developed by Tom Foster, Ph.D., the Evelyn F. McKnight chair for brain research in memory loss at UF, gave attendees the chance to listen to presentations, view posters and tour facilities such as the Aging and Rehabilitation Research Center and the McKnight Brain Institute programs in magnetic resonance neuroimaging, radiosurgery and deep brain stimulation surgery, cell and tissue analysis, and gene therapy. Also included was a panel discussion on the steps involved in translating experimental observations into research trials and therapies for patients.

The third annual meeting brought together researchers from four institutions funded by the foundation: the University of Florida, the University of Miami, the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the University of Arizona.

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“Moving diagnostic tools and treatments from the laboratory to the clinic requires teamwork among researchers in many different fields,” said Marco Pahor, M.D., director of the UF Institute on Aging, who spoke at the meeting. “The support of the McKnight Brain Research Foundation and meetings such as this help to propel things forward by facilitating and strengthening pivotal collaborations.”

Kenneth Heilman, M.D., a UF clinical professor of neurology and health psychology, and Scott Small, M.D., a Columbia University associate professor of neurology, delivered keynote addresses that attendees described as provocative, compelling and inspirational.

“They charged us with applying new insights from genetics and molecular, cellular, functional, behavioral and imaging neuroscience toward therapies for reversing and treating age-related cognitive decline,” said Dennis Steindler, Ph.D., executive director of UF’s McKnight Brain Institute.

The University of Florida’s Institute on Aging is recruiting men and women 70 and older to take part in the Aspirin in Reducing Events in the Elderly (ASPREE) study, an international study of whether daily low-dose aspirin can help stave off disabling conditions and increase life expectancy among healthy seniors.

The American Heart Association recommends aspirin for preventing recurrence of heart attack and stroke, but for healthy individuals the benefit is unclear. Furthermore, aspirin side effects, such as bleeding, may be more frequent in older adults.

“For some people, aspirin therapy might present health risks not worth taking. This study may provide much-needed evidence to guide geriatricians and researchers as they care for older adults and help them maintain good health as they age,” said principal investigator Susan Nayfield, M.D., M.Sc., chief of the division of clinical research.

The trial is funded by the National Institute on Aging, the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia, the National Heart Foundation of Australia, the Victorian Cancer Agency and Bayer Schering Pharma.

To be eligible, individuals must be 70 years or older and in good health. For five years, the selected participants will receive a daily dose of either aspirin or placebo. They will complete annual questionnaires, undergo annual physical examinations and laboratory tests, and participate in quarterly telephone calls. Participants will be compensated for their time.

For more information or to enroll, call 352-273-5919 or 866-386-7730 and ask about “The ASPREE study.”
The University of Florida’s Institute on Aging has received a grant from the National Institutes of Health to construct an almost 40,000-square-foot facility for clinical and translational research. The building will bring together scientists from a range of scientific disciplines and enhance how aging research is carried out on campus.

“This is a unique opportunity to have basic science, clinical, epidemiology and health services researchers working under the same roof on a common goal — improving the health and independence of older adults,” said Marco Pahor, M.D., director of the UF Institute on Aging.

Adjoining the Institute on Aging will be the Clinical and Translation Research Building, an 80,000-square-foot UF-funded complex that houses the Clinical and Translational Science Institute, the UF Clinical Research Center, clinical trial regulatory oversight offices, diabetes, muscular dystrophy and other clinical research programs, biostatistics, bioinformatics and epidemiology research, and a geriatric medicine multispecialty clinic.

The Institute on Aging portion of the project is funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and will create or retain an estimated 376 jobs. The building is designed according to the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED Platinum certification standards.

An artist rendering of the new Institute on Aging building to be completed in 2015.

Internship Opportunities:
The Health Promotion Center seeks interns to work on clinical trials examining the effects of physical activity and other lifestyle interventions among older adults. These positions will involve directly assisting participants with physical activity interventions, collecting data and monitoring safety. A strong interest in exercise training, experience working with older adults or a desire to do so, and basic computing skills are key. Please e-mail resumes to Allison Martin at amartin@aging.ufl.edu.
Unlocking life's mysteries – particularly the secrets of how long and how well we live – is the distinct focus of the University of Florida’s Institute on Aging. Our scientists and physicians are dedicated to achieving better understanding of the mechanisms of aging and how we can maintain or enhance our physical independence and cognitive abilities.

Private philanthropy is essential to our work. Your gift, regardless of size, can make the critical difference in funding new scientific endeavors. Imagine discoveries that fuel positive cellular changes; identify new therapies that help rehabilitate aging bones and joints; or uncover additional pharmaceutical allies. Private philanthropy makes all this and much more possible.

To learn more about how you can invest in a healthier and more independent tomorrow for us all, please contact Lauren Crump, MPH, at 352-265-7227 or e-mail lcrump@aging.ufl.edu.

Giving to the Institute on Aging

...why every dollar counts