# from the President



Collaboration is one of the many keys to success in the Texas Medical Center. The adage, "Two heads are better than one," is almost accurate. The author had not witnessed what could happen when more than two individuals, such as the highly skilled scientists who call the Texas Medical Center "home," pool their collective knowledge and talents.

Collaboration is an efficient way to achieve goals by capitalizing on mutual resources – goals that would not be achieved otherwise – and often the results are tremendous. By working together, partnerships only grow stronger, thereby elevating the quality of the work produced. And, as proof, many of our institutions are recognized nationally and internationally as leaders in their respective fields. Cultivated, collaborative partnerships are just one of the reasons the Texas Medical Center has been branded "a city of health."

Dr. Jim Willerson, president of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, once said it best, "The Texas Medical Center was built on intense competition; it will survive and thrive on collaboration."

Recently, The Methodist Hospital and the University of Houston signed a 30-year agreement to jointly develop health service and education programs. Methodist has consistently ranked in several categories of the annual *U.S. News & World Report*'s Best Hospitals list. The University of Houston ranks third among the state's comprehensive research universities, and sponsors more than $90 million a year in research. UH is home to more than 230 ongoing research projects. Current funding for health-related research at UH – including research at the UH College of Pharmacy, which is a TMC institution – is more than $77 million.

Prior to the UH-Methodist agreement, UH was unable to apply for any substantial research projects that would necessitate clinical trials. Clinical trials are a key component of bringing the latest health advances from the bench to the bedside. By collaborating with Methodist, the university will have access to funding, and in turn, the hospital will have access to the latest electronic and engineering technology needed to bring projects from concept to reality.

The resources created through collaboration will foster Texas Medical Center institutions far into the future.

*Richard E. Wainerdi, Ph.D., is Texas Medical Center president and* Texas Medical Center News *publisher/editor.*

# Webcast Demonstrates Surgery for Childhood Headaches

A surgery to treat childhood headaches caused by Chiari malformation airs March 16 at 5:30 p.m. during a live Webcast from Memorial Hermann Children's Hospital.

Chiari malformations are parts of the cerebellum that extend into the spinal canal, increasing pressure and inhibiting the flow of spinal fluid. Two small protrusions at the base of the cerebellum, called tonsils, are normally positioned inside the skull. In the Type I Chiari malformation – the most common and least severe form of the condition – the tonsils extend down into the spinal canal. In more severe forms, additional structures of the brain may migrate downward as well.

"The cerebellar tonsils act like a cork in a bottle. If the cork is too tight, the spinal fluid can't move like it should," said Stephen A. Fletcher, D.O, chief of pediatric neurosurgery at Memorial Hermann Children's Hospital and section chief of pediatric neurosurgery at UT Medical School. Fletcher will demonstrate how to surgically correct the problem during the March 16 Webcast.

After making a vertical incision along the lower skull and upper spine, Fletcher removes bone from the skull and the first two neck vertebrae. He also makes an incision in the brain's membrane and inserts a collagen patch. These measures relieve compression and reduce or eliminate symptoms in most patients.

Physicians once considered the condition rare, but modern magnetic resonance imaging has revealed Chiari malformations to be quite common. While the most common symptom is headache made worse by coughing or straining, dozens of other symptoms may be present, including dizziness, difficulty sleeping, weakness, numbness, tingling and vision problems.

The program is the third in a series sponsored by Memorial Hermann Healthcare System, giving medical professionals and consumers the opportunity to view surgical procedures live on the Internet. To view the Webcast, visit *http://www.or-live.com/memorialhermann/1327*.

For more information, call (713) 222-CARE (2273). ■



***HELP FOR HEADACHES—With just a few incisions, Stephen A. Fletcher, D.O., gets to the root cause of a patient's headache – Chiari malformations, which are brain material that mistakenly migrates into the spinal column. (Photo by Kim Gaubert)***


