UC San Diego School of Medicine Appoints Founding Chief of New Division of Biomedical Informatics

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The University of California, San Diego Health Sciences has appointed Lucila Ohno-Machado, MD, PhD, chief of its new Division of Biomedical Informatics in the Department of Medicine. Ohno-Machado will work closely with physicians at the UC San Diego Medical Center, with various academic departments at the university, as well as with scientists at the San Diego Supercomputer Center and the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2) at UC San Diego.

"The new division will serve as a hub for quantitative biomedical faculty and students at UC San Diego, allowing like-minded scientists to share ideas, resources, and experiences," said Ohno-Machado.

Lucila Ohno-Machado, MD, PhD

Under Ohno-Machado's leadership, UC San Diego will be implementing a graduate program in biomedical informatics, as well as a research and development program – enhanced with direct access to UCSD Medical Center's newly implemented inpatient and outpatient information systems – and organizing health information technology initiatives on campus.

"Dr. Ohno-Machado brings a diversity of experience to this position that will be extremely important for UC San Diego as we develop the infrastructure that will allow us to both learn more about the cause of various diseases, and to analyze our medical practices," said Kenneth Kaushansky, MD, MACP, Helen M. Ranney Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Medicine.

Biomedical informatics is the science underlying the collection, management, and application of biomedical knowledge and information to improve patient care, biomedical education, and life sciences research.   Some examples are informatics algorithms and tools that allow scientists to study individual human genomes or the genomes of hundreds of patients to determine the underlying cause of inheritable diseases or predict the outcome of cancer treatment, and new approaches for the analysis of medical data on large patient databases in order to develop quality improvement within the clinical setting.

Before joining UCSD, Ohno-Machado was director of the Harvard-MIT-Tufts-Boston University training program in biomedical informatics as well as director of the Decision Systems Group, a biomedical informatics research unit in the Department of Radiology at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. She holds a medical degree from the University of São Paulo in Brazil, and received her PhD degree in Medical Information Sciences and Computer Science from Stanford University, where she was a research fellow in medicine from 1991 to 1996.

She then went to Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, serving as an instructor, assistant professor, and associate professor in the Department of Radiology and the Division of Health Sciences and Technology at Harvard-MIT. There, she developed and taught new graduate courses in the computer science department. She is an elected fellow of the American College of Medical Informatics and of the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering. Besides her UCSD responsibilities, she is associate editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association*, and will also serve as associate editor of the *Journal of Biomedical Informatics* starting 2010. She chairs the scientific program committee for the 2009 American Medical Informatics Association Annual Symposium.

Dr. Gordon Gill, Dean for Scientific Affairs said, "Dr. Ohno-Mahado will build on the strengths of the UCSD campus in computer science and bioengineering to bring quantitative methods to identify best medical practices, enhance communication among health care providers and patients, and develop new computer and analytical methods to accomplish this."

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