

UCSD's Dr. Leon Thal Named To State Stem Cell Oversight Committee

December 13, 2004

Sue Pondrom

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced today the appointment of Dr. Leon Thal, professor and chair, department of neurosciences, to the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee, which oversees the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine created by the passage of Proposition 71.

Thal becomes the second UCSD member on the faculty and the fourth San Diegan to be named to the ICOC. Additional San Diego members are Edward H. Holmes, M.D., UCSD vice chancellor for health sciences and dean, UCSD School of Medicine; Richard A. Murphy, Ph.D., president and chief executive officer, the Salk Institute; and John C. Reed, M.D., Ph.D., president and chief executive officer, the Burnham Institute.

In addition to Thal, four others were appointed today to the ICOC: Keith L. Black, M.D., director of the Maxine Dunitz Neurosurgical Institute and director of neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles; Brian Henderson, M.D., dean of the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California and the Kenneth T. Norris Jr. chair in cancer prevention; Oswald Steward, Ph.D., chair and director of the Reeve-Irvine Research Center for Spinal Cord Injury at the University of California, Irvine; and former California first lady Gayle Wilson, a member of numerous boards of directors, including the board of trustees of California Institute of Technology, and a spokesperson for various health initiatives.

The Governor also announced today his selections for ICOC chairman and vice chairman. Robert Klein, president of Klein Financial Corporation and recently the chairman of the California Proposition 71 committee, was chosen as chairman while Edward Penhoet, Ph.D., president of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and a former chair of the California Health Care Institute, was named vice chairman.

Thal also serves as director of the UCSD Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and he leads a national consortium of more than 80 centers called the Alzheimer's Disease Cooperative Study (ADCS). The ADCS centers are funded with a grant from the National Institute of Health (NIH) on Aging to test promising drugs for Alzheimer's disease quickly and efficiently.

Thal's clinical experience includes service at over six hospitals throughout his career, including Bronx Municipal Hospital Center, Lincoln Hospital, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, St. Barnabas Hospital, UCSD Medical Center, and San Diego Veteran's Affairs Medical Center. He is currently an advisor on the Federal Drug Administration's (FDA) Alzheimer Assessment Team and is a member of many medical associations and boards including the San Diego chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. He has served as chairman of FDA Peripheral and Central Nervous System Drugs Advisory Committee and the Clinical Trial Subcommittee for the Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers. Thal was also the director of research programs for the Geriatrics Section at the American Academy of Neurology and served on the executive committee of the Alzheimer's Disease Center Program and the Medical and Scientific Advisory Board of the Alzheimer's Association. He has received numerous honors and awards and has extensive experience as a grant reviewer. He has published over 500 articles and sits on the editorial boards of the Alzheimer's Disease Review, Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, Dementia and Geriatric Disorders, Journal of Neural Transmission, International Journal of Geriatric Psychopharmacology and more.

Thal, 60, of San Diego, earned an M.D. from Downstate Medical Center, State University of New York and a Bachelor of Science degree from Tufts University.

Media Contact: Sue Pondrom (619) 543-6163

