Gabby recovery ‘remarkable’

After Diane Sawyer’s interview with Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-8) and her husband Mark Kelly Nov. 14, Tucson was abuzz at least as much as the rest of the nation and probably more.

The couple’s book Gabby was selling briskly in Tucson, and folks were hearing Gabby’s halting but clear online recorded message to her constituents, in which she expressed how much she misses Tucson and how she considers it a high honor to serve in the House of Representatives.

KGUN 9 News interviewed UMC Trauma Chief Dr. Peter Rhee, the first surgeon to work on Gabby after the Jan. 8 shootings. He quickly pointed out what he called the incorrect information that he saved Gabby’s life. “The trauma team saved her life,” he said.

After seeing the ABC News special, Dr. Rhee called it “gratifying,” “beyond words,” and “a great moment to see her do so well. I’m really excited for her, more than anything else.” He said in his kind of medicine, “My patients will never remember me,” but that in Gabby’s case, he wanted to make sure she got to the rehab center in Houston because “that’s the experience they’ll remember.”

“The negative aspects you can’t undo,” Dr. Rhee told KGUN 9’s Jessica Chapin, “the six deaths that occurred, people who have been injured permanently for a long period of time, but boy, it’s just a great experience to see so much of our city and the entire country pulling through like this for her, and for each other, too.”

Gabby tributes find new home

On Oct. 18, more than 260 boxes and bags of flowers, candles, notes and other tributes from memorials that sprang up following the Jan. 8 shootings will be relocated from The University of Arizona Medical Center—University Campus to a climate-controlled storage facility while the community decides their final disposition, the university reported.

“The tributes were left by well-wishers at makeshift shrines at the office of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-8), one of 19 people shot; at the shopping center where the shootings occurred; and on the lawn of The University of Arizona Medical Center, where most of the wounded were treated.

“UMC has been storing the tributes since last February, when tons of mementos were collected and boxed under the supervision of a University of Arizona archivist.”

On Oct. 18 the boxes were trucked to Dollar Storage, 2505 N. Dragoon Rd., which is donating storage space for the tributes for 12 months. Dollar Storage’s air-conditioned facility offers better protection for some of the more delicate items, said Steve Brigham, director of capital planning and projects at UMC, the university reported.

“The Institute for Civility, Respect, and Understanding is leading community discussions concerning the final disposition of the tributes and the possibility of a permanent memorial to the victims of the January shootings. The institute was founded by the family of Giffords aide Ron Barber, himself a survivor of the January shootings.”

Dr. Jackson at Stanford

Artist and retired surgeon Rockwell E. “Rock” Jackson, M.D. was made a member of the Cardinal Society of Stanford University in late October.

“It isn’t much of an award,” he said, “All you have to do is live long enough.” The Cardinal Society is for former Stanford students who have been alumni for 65 years. “Still, it was a nice event,” Jackson said, adding that he stayed with his daughter, who is a hospital attorney in Palo Alto.

Dr. Byrd SAR surgeon-general

Dr. Rudy Byrd of Sonora Family Practice and our History Committee, a.k.a. Abraham Radell Byrd III, M.D., was recently elected surgeon-general of the National Society, Sons of the American Revolution (NSSAR) for what he called at least two years.

It’s the latest installment in Dr. Byrd’s seven-year involvement with NSSAR, which it calls itself “the leading male lineage society that perpetuates the ideals of the War for Independence” and which seeks to “maintain and expand the meaning of patriotism, respect for our national symbols, the value of American citizenship, and the unifying force of e pluribus unum that was created from the people of many nations—one nation and one people.”

Currently Dr. Byrd is color guard vice-commander of the Tucson Chapter, Arizona State Society of the SAR; current president of the state society; and its historian. He’s well known for doing educational demonstrations of American Revolution-era weapons, clothing, and food.

Dr. Byrd has practiced in Tucson since 1981. Sonora Family Practice has three physicians including Dr. Byrd, Dr. Jim Martinez, and Dr. Steve Moore.

Regular Membership Meeting is Dec. 13

The next PCMS Regular Membership Meeting is Tuesday Dec. 13 at the office of President Timothy Fagan, M.D., at 3190 N. Swan Rd., 6:30 p.m. after the Board of Directors meets. It is a short meeting, mainly designed to count ballots. PCMS members may attend any Board of Directors meeting.

Clinica Amistad needs you

Dear PCMS members,

In operation since March, 2003, Clinica Amistad is a fully vol-
unteer clinic in South Tucson offering healthcare to uninsured patients of all ages.

We often see up to 40 patients per evening and serve more than 1,000 patients per year. The clinic provides these services every Wednesday evening from a county community office that by day is a federally funded Women and Children (WIC) Center.

Our clientele is largely low-income and primarily Hispanic, though we have seen people of many nationalities and ethnicities. This is usually their only opportunity to see a physician, have their health monitored, and possibly receive one or more of the following complementary therapies: physical therapy, massage, counseling, or acupuncture.

Our staff includes medical doctors, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, psychological and nutritional counselors, physical therapists, and practitioners of massage therapy and acupuncture. We deliver primary and urgent care, provide medications, and send patients for laboratory tests and X-rays as possible without cost to the patients.

There are many ways to help. We have several needs we believe you could help us with. Additional ideas are also very welcome.

- Physicians—We always need more physicians who carry their own malpractice insurance and are willing to volunteer. If you have the time or the inclination, we would welcome your presence for as many or as few Monday evenings as you could spare.
- Referrals—We need specialists to whom we can refer perhaps one client per month and who would see them for free or on a sliding fee scale. Because we serve many diabetic patients, services of a podiatrist would be most beneficial.
- Radiology services—Imaging services are costly and urgently needed. Any assistance with reduced cost radiology services would be a great benefit to our patients.
- Monetary donations—We have non-profit status, so you can make tax-deductible donations directly to us, tax ID No. 75-3060875. We are registered with the state, so any amount up to $200 you may wish to donate can be taken directly out of your state income tax. We are also a member of Community Shares of Southern Arizona. If you would like more information about this option for workplace giving, please call 331.7427.

Donations can be made out to Clinica Amistad and sent to: Box 27146, Tucson, Ariz. 85726. For more information, call 237.5434.

Thank you!

Sincerely,
Evan Kligman, M.D.
Raymond Graap, M.D.

New interviews for med school applicants

Interviews for admission to the University of Arizona College of Medicine are changing, but community physicians are still wanted for the process.

As you know, along with MCAT scores and grades, the interview is an important step. In an effort to standardize the interview process, increase the diversity of interviewers, and recruit applicants, the College of Medicine has changed the interview format to multiple mini-interviews (MMI).

Think of it as speed dating—but with the goal of getting into med school.

Each MMI has 10 applicants. They participate in a circuit of 10 stations (nine evaluated stations and one rest station) in a 90-minute process. The applicant has two minutes of prep at each station and a seven-minute interaction with an evaluator. Evaluators have three minutes to score applicants on a 1 (unsuitable) to 10 (outstanding) scale. Each station has a role: traditional, discussion, acting.

It may sound confusing, but it is working. You still get to ask open-ended questions, but don’t have an hour for answers. Fifty-six of these sessions are planned. Those who have participated so far describe the MMI as “fun.”

Community physicians are welcome in this process. MMI sessions are Tuesdays and Fridays. In January there are Saturday sessions. Morning sessions go from 8:30 to 11; afternoon sessions last from 3:45 to 6.

Contact the office of Director of Admissions Tanisha N. Johnson, M.Ed., 626.8626, to find out more or to sign up.

Plan under ACA addresses pre-existing conditions

The U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services reports that Arizona’s Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan (PCIP) is “already changing the lives of Americans who don’t have health coverage and need care.”

The plan is part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act or “Obamacare,” but many practitioners may not know about it yet. It is a federal insurance program for children and adults who've been locked out of the health insurance market because they have cancer, heart disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, asthma, or some other pre-existing condition. With PCIP, such patients can be insured for a wide range of benefits, including primary and specialty physicians' services, hospital care, and prescription drugs.

“Like commercial insurance plans, PCIP requires a monthly premium, a deductible, and some cost-sharing expenses. But patients won't be charged a higher premium because of their medical condition, and their eligibility isn't based on income,” CMS said.

CMS offered the example of Alison Ballai of Scottsdale. “In 2005 she had a near-fatal heart attack. She was rushed to emergency and immediately underwent surgery to correct a fully blocked coronary artery. Her costs were covered under her husband’s workplace-related insurance. But two years ago her husband lost his job. Alison was unable to obtain any policy that would cover her pre-existing condition, whose category was ‘coronary artery disease.’ Every insurance company she applied to turned her down. She was very fearful of getting sick again and not being covered. She signed up for PCIP as soon as it launched in Arizona last year.”

“PCIP is terrific,” she wrote in an op-ed in the Arizona Republic. “It’s very much like the plan I had under my husband’s employment. Now I go regularly for cardiology checkups, which include a stress test, blood work, etc., and I am doing well. If it wasn’t for my new PCIP health insurance, I would not be able to go for these checkups.”

To qualify for PCIP you must be a U.S. citizen or legal resident. You also must have a pre-existing condition or have been denied health coverage because of your health status. In addition, you must have been without health insurance for at least six months before you apply for PCIP.

PCIP offers three coverage options: Standard, Extended, and a Health Savings Account. With a Health Savings Account, you can use pre-tax earnings to pay for PCIP. Premiums are based on the amount a subscriber would pay if he or she had no pre-existing condition and was able to purchase individual insurance in the open market.

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PCIP premiums recently were lowered 40 percent in Arizona. The current premium for the Standard Option for an Arizona resident aged 35-44 is $188 per month. The Standard Option premium for a child 18 years old or younger is $104 per month. An Arizonaan aged 55 years old or older would pay $334 per month for the Standard Option.

In addition to a monthly premium, subscribers pay a deductible that ranges from $1,000 to $3,000, depending on which option they pick, for covered medical benefits before PCIP starts to pay. Prescription drugs may have separate deductibles. (Preventive-care services, such as cancer screenings and flu shots, are covered 100 percent, with no deductible.)

After the deductible, subscribers pay $25 for doctor visits, $4 to $40 for most prescription drugs, and 20 percent of the costs of any other covered benefits. A subscriber’s out-of-pocket costs cannot exceed $4,000 per year if he or she stays within the PCIP network. And there’s no lifetime cap on the amount that PCIP pays for care.

Under the Affordable Care Act, PCIP is a “transitional program until 2014, when all Americans, regardless of health status, will have access to affordable health insurance as the nation shifts to a new marketplace,” CMS said. “PCIP is operated in Arizona by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.”

For more information, go to www.pcip.gov or call toll-free at 1-866-717-5826. (TTY: 1-866-561-1604) The phones are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 11 p.m., Eastern Time.

Tour Parkinson’s research lab

If you have, or know someone with Parkinson’s disease, and you would like to learn more about the latest research, the University of Arizona College of Medicine reports that its Parkinson’s Research Laboratory has free monthly tours open to the public. They are scheduled on a weekday 11:30 to 1:30 p.m. and offer the chance to see scientific investigations firsthand and speak with researchers.

“The behind-the-scenes tours offer an opportunity to see scientific investigations first-hand and to speak with Scott J. Sherman, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of neurology, and his research team. Lunch and complimentary parking are included.”

Space is limited and registration is required. For information about upcoming tours or to register, call Melissa McGee at the College of Medicine Office of Development, 520.626.2827, or e-mail mcgeem@email.arizona.edu.

Sculpture dedicated at College of Medicine

Speaking of Dr. Sherman (above), the UoA tells us that a sculpture piece Excalibur by Tucson artist Dr. Elihu Boroson, who has Parkinson’s disease, was recently dedicated at the medical college in honor of Dr. Sherman.

The sculpture depicts the legendary sword in the stone, and was installed Nov. 18 in the lobby of the Medical Research Building, 1656 E. Mabel St., on the AHSC campus of the UoA.

“Dr. Boroson, a retired veterinarian and accomplished artist, carved the sculpture from a single piece of white marble that was quarried in Lee, Mass.,” the university reported. “He created the piece to honor Parkinson’s researcher Scott J. Sherman, M.D., Ph.D., who was present for the dedication.”

The text on the plaque that will accompany the sculpture says it honors Dr. Sherman for his “efforts to increase the quality of life for Parkinson’s patients, and his ongoing work to understand the disease and find a cure.”