

UND

Telling the tale of the med school

■ Author of book detailing 100 years of medicine in North Dakota to hold signing Tuesday

By David Dodds
Herald Staff Writer

UND medical school dean H. David Wilson says he couldn't let 100 years of history slip by without documenting it.

But who would do it? Wilson said, from the start, he knew just the resident-historian to tackle the mission — John Vennes, a past interim dean (1973 to 1975) of the school and a professor emeritus in microbiology and immunology at UND.



Vennes

Vennes, with the help of co-author Patrick McQuire, a Baltimore journalist, whittled a century of stories, trials and triumphs of

UND's Medical School and Health Sciences, from its humble beginnings to its transition to a four-year degree granting institution to its emergence as a cancer and brain research hub, all into 280 pages.

The book, "North Dakota Heal Thyself," hit stores earlier this week in Grand Forks. Vennes will be on hand for a book signing from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Monday during a community open house at the medical school and from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Barnes & Noble University Bookstore.

Another signing will take place from 9 to 10 a.m. Saturday in the medical school's Vennes Atrium, named for the author.

Wilson is giving his commissioned author rave reviews after reading an early copy of the book. He said it's not just about the medical school. Rather, it delves into the his-

Centennial open house set for medical school

■ Public is encouraged to get a peek inside, free health screenings and birthday cake

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Officials of UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences want the community to come out Monday and celebrate its 100th anniversary.

Everyone is invited to the party, which will run from 3 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in the medical school headquarters, 501 N. Columbia Road.

The first 100 guests will get a free water bottle, medical students will be on hand to provide free health screenings, tours will be given and more than 30 informational displays will be set up for the public to peruse, organizers say.

And, of course, birthday cake will be served.

Dean H. David Wilson said it'll be a chance for the public to get a glimpse of what happens inside the medical school they've funded.

"This is a little beehive," he

said. "People work in here 24 hours a day seven days a week; it never stops."

The open house falls on the date — Sept. 26 — that the medical school held its first formal classes in 1905. Both the state of North Dakota and the city of Grand Forks have established the day as UND School of Medicine Day.

Amanda Scurry, a school spokeswoman, said that the public will be able to sit in lectures, in which medical school faculty will discuss and handle actual organs of the human body. They'll also be able to get a demonstration on how to diagnose illnesses and be able to practice on "mock" patient cases.

Second-year medical student will work with their first-year peers to provide health screenings, including checks on balance and posture, blood pressure, pulse, body mass index and glucose levels.

The transition

He said probably the most important part of the book deals with the school's transition from a two-year basic medicine training site to a full four-year degree-grant institution.

UND had been sending its students to other schools around the country to finish their final two years of medical education. But after the students left North Dakota, they seldom returned to practice medicine, choosing to stay in the hospitals where they performed their residency training.

The North Dakota Legislature finally gave UND permission to establish a four-year program in 1973.

"That was the pivotal moment for this school," Vennes said. "It was either go to four years or else."

mous James Gang as a cadaver.

Challenges

Wilson said the book also doesn't overlook the challenges that medical school leaders endured over the years as a result of insufficient funding from the state. "They were holding on by their fingernails and yet they were able to hold it all together," Wilson said.

He said, despite its financial struggles over the years and its small stature, UND medical school has gained a reputation for having an innovative curriculum and producing first-rate physicians.

The school also has made strides in research in cancer and neurodegenerative disorders, such as Alzheimer's diseases. The value of its re-

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