

NIAAA NEWSLETTER

FEATURING INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON ALCOHOL ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM

WINTER 2009 NUMBER 17

Grants.gov Switches to New Adobe Forms

The NIH Office of Extramural Research (OER) reminds grant applicants that after January 1, 2009, most electronic submissions to Grants.gov must use new Adobe based forms.

The new forms require very specific software. To ensure a smooth transition, users must download Adobe Reader version 8.1.3 or later available at no cost from Grants.gov and use it to open and complete their application(s). Noncompatible versions of Adobe Reader will prevent successful submission of applications.

For details, visit OER's Resources for Adobe Transition Web site at: http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/adobe_transition.htm

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NIAAA Staff Bid Farewell to Dr. Ting-Kai Li

After 6 years as director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), Ting-Kai Li, M.D., stepped down on October 31, 2008. NIAAA and NIH staff honored Dr. Li at a retirement reception on October 29.

NIH acting director, Raynard Kington, M.D., Ph.D., praised Dr. Li's "committed leadership," citing examples such as the institution of a rolling 5-year strategic planning process, the establishment of an extramural advisory board subcommittee, the appointment of an outstanding group of senior staff, the championing of young investigators, and the creation of intra-Institute teams to focus on emerging cross-disciplinary issues in alcohol-related research.

Dr. Li noted, "I leave NIAAA and NIH feeling that my tenure has resulted in greater transparency, accountability, trust, and stability of funding for alcohol research. Research supported by NIAAA in the past 5 years has reframed our understanding of alcohol dependence in several ways by demonstrating that it is a developmental disorder that has its roots in childhood and adolescence. While initiation of drinking is largely influenced by peer and family environmental factors, the transition to habitual and dependent drinking is strongly influenced by genetic factors."

A strong proponent of collaborative international research, Dr. Li spurred the establishment of research relationships between NIAAA and individuals at Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale

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Dr. Raynard Kington and Dr. Ting-Kai Li talk during Dr. Li's retirement reception.



PERSONNEL NEWS

New Appointments

Dr. Andras Orosz joined the Division of Metabolism and Health Effects as a program director. He previously held research positions with the National Cancer Institute. In 2005, Dr. Orosz joined the Cardiology Division at the University of Utah Health Sciences Center in Salt Lake City, where his research focused on elucidating the cardioprotective functions of heat shock proteins against oxido-reductive stress and mitochondrial damage.

Dr. Aaron White joined the Division of Epidemiology and Prevention Research as a health scientist administrator. Dr. White was assistant research professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Duke University Medical Center and in the Department of Psychology at Duke University. His research interests include alcohol's effects on psychological processes.

Dr. Ellen Witt was named deputy director of the Division of Neuroscience and Behavior. Since joining NIAAA in 1989, she has managed a broad multi-disciplinary portfolio in both animal and human research in behavioral pharmacology, sleep, biological risk markers for alcoholism, and cognitive and developmental neuroscience. Dr. Witt also has represented NIAAA on the NIH Blueprint for Neuroscience, the NIH Toolbox for Neurological and Behavioral Assessment, and several other trans-NIH programs.

Awards

Dr. Markus Heilig, NIAAA clinical director and chief of the Laboratory of Clinical and Translational Studies, received the 2008 Dan Anderson Research Award for his identification of a novel neurotransmitter system involved in alcohol craving. Sponsored by the Butler Center for Research at Hazelden, the award honors a single published article by a researcher who has advanced the scientific knowledge of addiction recovery.

Dr. Heilig earned the award for his article, "Neurokinin 1 receptor antagonism as a possible therapy for alcoholism," published in *Science* (Vol. 319, pages 1536–1539).

The study identified a specific brain receptor, the neurokinin 1 receptor (NK1R), involved in craving and stress responses. A medication targeting this receptor blocked the craving for alcohol and improved overall well-being in a group of recently detoxified alcohol-dependent patients.

"Bringing the advances of modern neuroscience to clinical application, for the benefit of patients with addictive disorders, is the dream all of us have here," said Dr. Heilig. "On behalf of the whole team, I am obviously very pleased and honored," he said.



Dr. Warren Becomes NIAAA Acting Director

Dr. Kenneth R. Warren became acting director of NIAAA on November 1, 2008, following Dr. Ting-Kai Li's retirement.

A long-time senior administrator who joined NIAAA in 1976, Dr. Warren is nationally recognized for his work on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). He initiated NIAAA's research program on FAS more than 30 years ago and currently chairs the Interagency Coordinating Committee on FAS. Since February 2008, Dr. Warren has served as NIAAA deputy director.

Dr. Warren has received numerous honors, including a Superior Service Award from the Public Health Service in 1982 for his work in the development of the first Surgeon General's Advisory on FAS. In 1994, Dr. Warren received the Seixas Award from the Research Society on Alcoholism (RSA). In 2002, he received the Henry Rosett Award from RSA's FAS Study Group. In 2007, the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (NoFAS) named Dr. Warren into its Tom and Linda Daschle FASD Hall of Fame and honored him with the NoFAS Excellence Award in 2008.



Dr. Li Honored at Capitol Hill Briefing on Alcohol Treatment

On October 8, the advocacy foundation known as the Friends of NIAAA sponsored a second educational briefing for Congressional staff. More than 100 attendees took part in the event on Capitol Hill, which was arranged by the American Psychological Association (APA).

The briefing was titled "Alcoholism Isn't What It Used to Be: New Findings Foreshadow Shifts in Treatment Strategies." Speakers included retiring

NIAAA director Dr. Ting-Kai Li; Dr. Mark Willenbring, director of NIAAA's Division of Treatment and Recovery Research; and NIAAA grantee Dr. Kenneth Sher of the University of Missouri.

At the briefing, APA fellow Dr. Carlo DiClemente, chair of the Friends of NIAAA, presented an award to Dr. Li for "outstanding leadership...of the Nation's premiere research Institute dedicated to understanding the relationship between

alcohol use disorders and health." For slides and photos of the event, visit: www.apa.org/ppo/spin/1008.html#01

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Recent Updates to Alcohol Policy Information System Web Site

The Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS) has posted its latest update, covering the period from January 2, 2007, through January 1, 2008. More than 35 updates have been made in the database.

Underage Drinking

A project of NIAAA's Division of Epidemiology and Prevention Research, the Web-based resource provides State-by-State information on selected alcohol policies. Dr. Mike Hilton, the APIS project manager, said, "Many of the recent changes are consistent with the goal of reducing underage drinking and its consequences as well as alcohol-related death and injury in the general population."

For example, Alaska has adopted a law to impose criminal liability on those

who host underage drinking parties. Illinois and Kansas have strengthened their hosting laws.

Insurance Regulations

In the area of State health policy regarding insurance regulations, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Oregon, and the District of Columbia have adopted provisions that specifically prohibit insurers from denying payment for insurance benefits for losses attributed to intoxication of the insured (also referred to as Uniform Accident and Sickness Policy Provision Laws, or UPPL). In all cases, except Maine, laws that specifically permitted denial of insurance were repealed. Colorado amended its health insurance parity law requiring insurance companies to provide alcohol-related coverage.

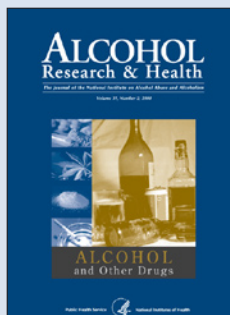
Previous law only required that insurers offer such coverage.

Alcohol and Pregnancy

Several States updated legislation dealing with alcohol and pregnancy. Louisiana and Pennsylvania have adopted laws imposing reporting requirements on health professionals regarding suspicion or evidence of alcohol use or abuse by women during pregnancy. Texas has adopted a mandatory warning sign law related to alcohol and pregnancy.

Other prominent changes involved laws concerning alcohol and motor vehicles. For details on these policy developments and other changes, visit the Web site at: www.alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov.

NEW PUBLICATIONS



Alcohol Research & Health: Alcohol and Other Drugs (Vol. 31, No. 2, 2008)

This issue of NIAAA's peer-reviewed

journal examines the complex actions and interactions of alcohol and other drugs to better understand the concept of addiction. Articles cover the mechanisms behind addiction, the role of genetics, and the influence that stress has on the development of dependence. Other articles address the epidemiology of alcohol and drug use disorders and examine the latest findings on diagnosing and treating patients with dual alcohol and other drug disorders.

Alcohol Alert #76: Alcohol and Other Drugs

Current research has helped scientists understand the prevalence, causes, diagnosis, and treatment of alcohol and other drug use disorders. This *Alert* explores some of the barriers that prevent clinicians from accurately diagnosing alcohol and other drug use disorders and explores how to overcome those barriers. It describes the DSM-IV-TR diagnostic criteria for alcohol and other drug use disorders and suggests alternative ways of thinking about addiction.



Alcohol Research & Health: Neuroscience Pathways to Alcohol Dependence Part 1—Overview of the Neurobiology of Dependence (Vol. 31, No. 3, 2008)

This issue explains key concepts in neuroscience, including what we know about how alcohol affects the brain and the resulting behavioral and physical changes.

For NIAAA publications and other resources, visit the NIAAA Web site (www.niaaa.nih.gov) or write to: NIAAA, Publications Distribution Center, P.O. Box 10686, Rockville, MD 20849-0686.



Funding Opportunities

In December NIAAA joined with the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke and the National Institute on Drug Abuse to issue [RFA-NS-09-003](#), which supports research to develop small-molecule probes for the study of biological functioning in the nervous system. This research may help identify potential therapeutic targets associated with neurological disorders, alcoholism, and substance abuse disorders.

NIAAA also issued [RFA-AA-09-003](#) (an R01 research grant mechanism) and [RFA-AA-09-004](#) (an R21 grant mechanism), supporting research on alcohol's effects on glial cells, which are crucial for maintaining healthy brain function. Alcohol exposure on glial targets may result in abnormal neurotransmission, brain neuroadaptations, and neurotoxicity.

For details about NIAAA announcements, visit <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/index.html>.

Farewell to Dr. Li (Continued from page 1)

(INSERM), France's equivalent of the NIH. He promoted similar research collaborations between NIAAA and national research agencies in the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, and Japan.

Dr. Li bolstered the upper echelons of NIAAA leadership by hiring highly regarded alcohol scientists to direct NIAAA divisions and to serve as associate Institute directors. In 2004, he oversaw the relocation of the Institute's administrative and extramural offices, as well as NIAAA intramural laboratories, to their newly constructed quarters on Fishers Lane in Rockville, Maryland. The new buildings were a welcome upgrade for NIAAA staff and have helped to improve communications and interactions across NIAAA's intramural and extramural divisions.

Dr. Li played an important role in the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research, an initiative created by the NIH in 2003 to support cross-cutting, trans-NIH programs designed to fill gaps in fundamental knowledge and technology and

encourage innovative, high-risk/high-reward approaches to complex biomedical problems. In 2004, Dr. Li was selected as co-chair of the Pathways to Discovery Program, which supports research to advance our understanding of how the building blocks of the body—genes, proteins, metabolites—function and interact via complex systems to maintain health and respond to disease. Dr. Li also was instrumental in crafting the Metabolomics Technology Development Initiative, which emerged from the Pathways to Discovery Program, one of the first Roadmap initiatives to be funded in 2005. Although Roadmap programs are not intended to target specific diseases and environmental stressors, such as alcohol, many of the Roadmap-funded projects focus on alcohol, alcohol-related illness, and addiction.

Upon Dr. Li's retirement, Kenneth R. Warren, Ph.D., NIAAA's deputy director, became the Institute's acting director on November 1, 2008 (see story on page 2).

Calendar of Events

NIAAA will participate in or exhibit at meetings and conferences listed below. For additional information or updates on these events, consult the sponsoring organization.

FEBRUARY

- ▶ *February 5*
Meeting of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
5635 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD
Contact: Abraham Bautista, NIAAA, bautista@mail.nih.gov
- ▶ *February 9–12*
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) 19th National Leadership Forum
National Harbor, MD
Contact: <http://www.cadca.org>

- ▶ *February 19*
9th Annual Guze Symposium on Alcoholism
Midwest Alcoholism Research Center
Washington University Medical Center
St. Louis, MO
Contact: <http://www.alcoholdependence.org/>

APRIL

- ▶ *April 8–11*
PRIDE World Drug Prevention Conference
Louisville, KY
Contact: <http://www.prideyouthprograms.org/>

- ▶ *April 18–22*
Experimental Biology 2009
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB)
New Orleans, LA
Contact: <http://www.faseb.org>

- ▶ *April 30–May 3*
American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) 40th Annual Medical–Scientific Conference
New Orleans, LA
Contact: <http://www.asam.org>