THE CMBB QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Issue 6, April 2000

CMBB STAFF:
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MENTORING AND PEER REVIEW WORKSHOP

This year our annual workshop, being held from May 1-4, 2000, will include the mentors of our postdoctoral and junior faculty supplement recipients as well as recipients of all of our career development awards (K01, K08). Invitation letters should have been received by now, and hopefully your responses have been sent to our contractor, the Scientific Consulting Group, Inc. (SCG). The agenda has been pretty well set and we would like to thank all of you who have agreed to speak to our invitees. Our entire staff is looking forward to seeing all of our invitees and speakers in Gaithersburg, MD on May 1.

MINORITY INSTITUTION/CANCER CENTER PROGRAM

The CMBB has planned an MI/CC Program Technical Assistance Workshop, to be held May 12-13, 2000 in New Orleans, LA . Invitation letters have been sent to MSI Presidents, Cancer Center Directors, scientists and others who have shown an interest in this program and we hope you have responded to the Scientific Consulting Group, Inc. (SCG), our contractor, who is handling all of our logistics. To learn more about the MI/CC Program, please call our office at 301-496-7344.

PROGRESS REPORTS

We would like to take this opportunity to remind all of you that separate Progress Reports for your minority supplements are due each year. Please bear in mind that if we do not receive the separate Progress Report for the minority supplement it will hold up the funding of your noncompeting renewal. If you are a postdoc or junior faculty, you should be preparing your progress reports. If you need a Progress Report form, please e-mail your request to LaShell Gaskins at lg60m@nih.gov.

CONGRATULATIONS to **ERIC BAILEY,** our very own Program Director, on the publication of his book Medical Anthropology and African American Health, published by Bergin & Garvey, Westport, CT. Dr. Bailey examines data on mortality, census, preventive health, alternative medical practices, clinical research, and intervention from a biopsychosociocultural perspective. Fieldwork in a public health department setting provides the medical anthropologist with a unique opportunity to investigate cultural and health issues of a particular population in a public health setting. Dr. Bailey explains the steps and procedures for conducting an applied medical anthropological

study, based on his experience doing fieldwork projects over the past 15 years.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

As part of the required peer review activities associated with their Mentored Career Development (K01) grants, Maria Cardenas from Duke University, Carlos de los Santos from the State University of New York, and Irma Sanchez from Harvard University, participated as *ad hoc* reviewers for the Manpower and Training Review Subcommittee. This committee is responsible for reviewing Training grants (T32), Mentored Career Development Awards (K01), Howard Temin Awards (K01), Mentored Research Scientist Development Awards (K01), Minorities in Clinical Oncology (K08), and Patient Oriented Research for Underrepresented Minorities grants (K23). They each were given secondary review assignments for a number of K01 and K08 grant applications and did their jobs admirably. Drs. Cardenas, de los Santos and Sanchez all agreed that the Mock Study Section sessions that were held at our past Professional Development Workshops were very helpful in preparing them for the "real thing."

Dr. Springfield thanked Dr. Bell, the Scientific Review Administrator, the Chairperson, Dr. Nancy Oleinick, and the committee members for allowing the mentored peer review process to take place. Prior to adjournment of the review meeting, Dr. Oleinick thanked all three for participating and commented that they helped to bring a new perspective as well as a greater appreciation of ethnic and cultural differences to the committee.

<u>And, here are their first impressions</u>:

Irma Sanchez writes "I just wanted to thank you again for giving me the opportunity to participate in an NIH study section. This is an opportunity that is usually reserved for senior investigators-frankly I never thought it would ever happen to me.

One of the main lessons I took home was that everything is fair game in the judging of a grant. Some reviewers focus on the quality of the science while others focus more on the scientific environment. A simple proofreading of the grant for typographical errors or grammatical mistakes could make a huge difference as to whether a grant is funded. The last lesson I learned is just a reiteration of the adage "if at once you don't succeed, try, try again."

From Carlos de los Santos, "First of all, let me thank you for the opportunity to participate in a 'real' study section of the NCI. And despite my jokes to the contrary, I am looking forward to the opportunity to participate again next year. I am convinced that this experience was much richer than any earlier participation in mock sections, because previously we only dealt with funded applications that had scored high in the real world. This time we got to observe and participate in discussions of many applications that will not be funded. It is absolutely true that each application is a special case, but some of the reviewers concerns and/or comments were common to many applications." He summarizes:

(1) A common mistake that applicants make is to write proposals that would be considered over ambitious. Generally this mistake is not the primary reason for refusal of an application and reviewers acknowledge that 'we all were over ambitious at this stage,' but in many cases it adds to other perceived weaknesses resulting in a low score.

(2) The opposite characteristic is that an application can be considered superficial or over simplistic. In many cases this only weakness was enough for a low score or even a recommendation of no further consideration. Bottom line is, better be over ambitious than superficial.

(3) Little involvement of the mentor. In many cases the reviewers perceived that the mentor did not read the application and considered this fact as red flag, especially when some of the proposed experiments were outside of the mentor's previous experience. It is a fact that mentors don't have a lot of time to dedicate to the applicant/proposal. Besides, the proposals generally evolve from the mentors own research area, and applicants have to put them as mentors. A possible solution to this conundrum, well received by the reviewers, is the use of co-mentors. Look for other professors, better if within the same institution to avoid raising questions of communications,

who can invest more time helping you with the proposal and later with advise. For example, there was a case of an applicant that had three mentors with combined expertise covering the whole proposal. The applicant proposed a plan where he was going to meet twice a year with all three mentors, who form a sort of mentoring committee, to evaluate the progress of the applicant and advice him. I think this idea made an impact during the consideration of the proposal.

(4) Reviewers want to see that the applicant is going to learn NEW skills. Proposals where applicants only proposed to do only the same type of experiments they mastered while graduate students or from a previous postdoc position were considered weak. Bottom line is, a proposal should have some experiments that are new for the applicant. But there is a catch here, if the new skills are not within the repertoire of your mentor, look for a co-mentor with such expertise or, at least, for a collaborator. And the applicant should emphasize the new skill he will learn in the description of the training plan.

(5) Proper English grammar and spelling is a big plus for a proposal. Reviewers have many applications to read and they hate to deal with unclear paragraphs or see spelling errors. I know that the language is a serious limitation for many of us for who English is a second language and there is not much that we can do. If possible, ask an English-speaking friend to read the proposal for spelling, wrong grammar and/or confusing paragraphs. This person should know English but does not have to be a scientist.

(6) Reviewers like to see proposals that could become a vehicle for independence. I mean, the name of the application and specific aims of the proposal should be different from what the mentor is actually doing.

(7) When resubmitting an application, ALL the concerns of previous reviewers MUST be addressed. Follow the suggestions of previous reviewers, because they have the pink sheet in

from of their eyes along with the resubmitted proposal. Of course, get your mentor involved when answering a previous review.

THE CMBB BULLETIN BOARD

From **MIGUEL SALAZAR,** University of Texas at Austin, one of our K01 recipients, who was recently invited to review grants for the MBRS program. He says that "the practice session I attended at the Mentored Career Development Awardee meeting last year was extremely useful and applicable to this "real life" situation. It certainly increased my confidence that I could do this job. I look forward to our next meeting this coming May."

From **VALERIE MONTGOMERY RICE,** University of Kansas Medical Center, one of our potential K01 recipients recently I participated as a reviewer for the Cooperative Multi-Center Reproductive Medicine Network, U10 grants. She says it was an enlightening experience that gave her real insight into the review process.

From **ALEXZANDER ASEA**, supplement awardee, Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Harvard. recently received a Travel Grant from the Federation of American societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) Programs to attend "Write Winning Grant Seminar & Workshops .

He also lets us know that the preliminary results that formed the basis for his K01 application was accepted for publication in Nature Medicine as a full length manuscript, and was also invited to be the Organizing Committee Chairman, serve on the Scientific Committee and give an oral presentation of his research at the International Symposium on Heat Shock Proteins in Biology and Medicine.

Dr. Asea says "Without your encouragement and support none of this would have been possible. I am truly grateful."

Congratulations to **KIMLIN ASHING-GIWA,** one of our former supplement recipients**,** on being awarded a DoD grant. Her grant is entitled "Identifying QOL and Psychosocial Risk Factors and their Sociocultural Mediators in African American, Philipino, and White Breast Cancer Survivors." The study was funded for five years.

Congratulations to **MARK NELSON**, one of our supplement alumni, who has been invited and

has accepted an offer to be a member of Pathology Study Section B for the NIH.

Dr. Sherry Mills, Chief, Applied Sociocultural Research Branch, Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, left the NCI at the end of March. We wish her well in her new position with ABT Associates, Inc.

The Office of Special Populations Research, NCI has launched a newsletter entitled "Perspectives Eliminating Disparities Through Research." Their first issue should be out this spring. If you are interested in receiving this free newsletter and be included on their mailing list, please contact the editor at the following address:
Francis X. Mahaney, Jr., Editor, Perspectives, National Cancer Institute, 6120 Executive Boulevard, EPS, Suite 320, Bethesda, MD 20892-7161; or Fax: (3010 435-9225; or e-mail: fm58q@nih.gov.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Dr. Rena Pasick, Director, Prevention Sciences, Northern California Cancer Center, advises that they are recruiting for a Research Scientist. The announcement appears below.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

Research Scientist: Social/Behavioral Scientist in Prevention Sciences/Cancer Control

The Prevention Sciences Program of the Northern California Cancer Center (NCCC), located in the San Francisco Bay Area, is recruiting a Research Scientist with experience in behavioral intervention and/or survey research, particularly among African American communities. Rank will be determined by the applicant-s qualifications.

The NCCC is seeking an outstanding researcher with expertise in the social, cultural, and behavioral factors that influence the health of African Americans. Particular areas of interest include but are not limited to descriptive and intervention research addressing socioeconomic, cultural, and behavioral factors and access to medical care as these relate to primary prevention, early detection, survivorship, and participation in clinical trials.

Individuals from a variety of disciplines (public health, behavioral science, health education, health psychology, sociology, anthropology, epidemiology) are encouraged to apply. Applicants must hold a Ph.D., Dr.P.H., M.D./M.P.H. or equivalent degree. The successful candidate will contribute as an investigator to currently funded and future NCCC studies, and will be expected to develop independent research. The applicant must also demonstrate successful collaboration with teams of interdisciplinary investigators. Research experience in cancer control is desirable but not required. Demonstrated ability to establish strong community ties is preferred, and a commitment to research among African Americans, as evidenced by appropriate scholarly contributions to the field, is required.

To apply, please send a curriculum vitae and three letters of reference to:

Rena J. Pasick, Dr.P.H.
Director, Prevention Sciences
Northern California Cancer Center
P.O. Box 5033
Union City, CA 94587-3106.

The Northern California Cancer Center is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer, and we strongly encourage minorities and women to apply.

web site: www.nccc.org