

nih record



ABOVE • How much did the Clinical Center raise for the recent CFC? See p. 10.

features

Summit Seeks Health Equity	1
Nine NIH'ers Among 2008 AAAS Fellows	3
Dietz To Deliver Astute Clinician Lecture	5
PECASE Recognizes 12 NIH-Supported Researchers	10
Turning 'Brain Drain' into Gain	16

departments

Briefs	2
Milestones	12
Digest	14
Volunteers	15

Angelou Brings Art to Science Summit

Health Disparities Gets Intramural Research Component

By Carla Garnett

A jazz scat segued seamlessly into a *Deep River* blues riff. African proverbs wound naturally into Croatian travel tales. Rhythmic lines from Langston Hughes flowed effortlessly into her own stream of consciousness stanzas. It was just Dr. Maya Angelou doing what she does—this time for the sake of health and medical research, and for the inspiration and edification of about 4,400 attendees at “NIH Summit: The Science of Eliminating Health Disparities” held Dec. 16-18 at the Gaylord Convention Center, National Harbor, Md.



Dr. Maya Angelou addresses health equity summit.

“When I thought about all the people you touch by the work you do, I thought I would commend you and thank you in their names—for all of the people whose faces you’ll never see and whose names you’ll never hear—because of your commitment to the idea of equity in medical care for everyone,” Angelou said. “I think we can

SEE **SUMMIT**, PAGE 8



Dr. Adel Mahmoud updates the ACD on the biosafety lab at Boston University.

Budget, Boston Lab Top Meeting Agenda

ACD Hears U.S. Stimulus Package Could Spur NIH Finances

By Carla Garnett

Prospects for Congress to augment NIH’s 2009 budget and an update on the status of a Boston biosafety lab topped the agenda at the 97th meeting of the advisory committee to the NIH director on Dec. 5.

With NIH operating under a continuing resolution (CR) since the beginning of fiscal year 2009 on Oct. 1 of last year and much of the

SEE **ACD**, PAGE 4

NIEHS Welcomes Birnbaum as Next Director

By Eddy Ball

Dr. Linda S. Birnbaum will become NIEHS’s fifth director in its 43-year history this month. Her appointment was announced in December by NIH acting director Dr. Raynard Kington. Birnbaum has most recently been a senior advisor at the Environmental Protection Agency, where she has served for 16 years as director of the Experimental Toxicology Division.

As director of NIEHS and the National Toxicology Program (NTP), Birnbaum will oversee a \$730 million budget that funds multidisciplinary biomedical research programs, prevention and intervention efforts that encompass training, education, technology transfer and community outreach. The institute currently supports more than 1,240 research grants.

“I am excited about serving as the director of NIEHS at a time when integration across disciplines is essential, from molecular biology to pharmacology and physiology to epidemiology,” said Birnbaum. “Complex environmen-

SEE **BIRNBAUM**, PAGE 6



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NIH Record Office Bldg. 31, Rm. 5B41
Phone (301) 496-2125 Fax (301) 402-1485

Web address <http://nihrecord.od.nih.gov>

Editor

Richard McManus
rm26q@nih.gov

Assistant Editor

Carla Garnett
cg9s@nih.gov

Staff Writers

Jan Ehrman
je48b@nih.gov

Belle Waring
bw174w@nih.gov

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briefs

BTRIS Seminar Series Begins

The Biomedical Translational Research Information System (BTRIS) team is holding a Translational Research Informatics Seminar Series. Each month, Dr. Jim Cimino, BTRIS project manager and chief of the Laboratory for Informatics Development, will host discussions on the current use of information systems in translational research. The seminars will be held in Lipsett Amphitheater, Bldg. 10 from 2-3 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 21; Tuesday, Mar. 24; Tuesday, Apr. 21; Tuesday, May 19; Tuesday, June 16 and Tuesday, Sept. 15.

BTRIS—a research data repository and tool that will provide investigators with electronic access to, and analysis capabilities of, research data—is currently under development and will be released in July. For more information about BTRIS, visit <http://btris.nih.gov/>.

Summer Camp Guide 2009

Summer camp registration is just around the corner; now is the time to start researching your options. For NIH'ers' convenience, the Division of Amenities and Transportation Services, ORS, and the NIH WorkLife Center are offering Camp Guide 2009 at 5 locations on 5 different days. All sessions are from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 13, Bldg. 10, B1 cafeteria

Wednesday, Jan. 14, Rockledge I, 4th floor cafeteria

Thursday, Jan. 15, Bldg. 31 cafeteria

Wednesday, Jan. 21, Executive Plaza North lobby

Thursday, Jan. 22, Bldg. 50 lobby

Attend one of these events to pick up the 2009 Summer Camp Guide and camp brochures. Camp vendors will not be on site; however, a child care referral specialist and NIH staff will be available to help you get started. All services are free of charge.

For those who need reasonable accommodation to participate, contact Tonya Lee at (301) 402-8180 five days before the event.

ORS Wellness Series Continues, Jan. 14

The next lecture in ORS's wellness initiative "Focus on You: Promoting Employee Health and Well-Being at NIH" will be "Too busy to exercise? Simple ways to become more active," on Wednesday, Jan. 14 from 1 to 2 p.m. in the Bldg. 1 cafeteria (3rd floor). The lecture will provide simple, effective and fun things that anyone

can do to be more active (and shed those holiday pounds). Future topics will address how to begin physical activity, lifestyle interventions to reduce heart disease and stress reduction. For a complete list of topics and locations, call Chris Gaines at (301) 402-8180 or visit <http://dats.ors.od.nih.gov/>. Sign language interpreters will be provided. Individuals who need reasonable accommodation should call the number above and/or the Federal Relay, 1-800-877-8339.



This Ornament Is a 'Knockout'

The NIH Super Knockout Mouse, pictured above (a construction of Eppendorf tubes, Qiagen collection tubes, a Kimble Pasteur pipette, optical filter paper and Sarstedt permanent markers), was the winning entry in the Holiday Ornament Competition for NICHD fellows. Designer and postbac Eleanor Ory is in the section on medical biophysics, Program in Physical Biology.

PHOTO: ANNA SCHMIDT

'Yellow Sheet' Goes Green

The NIH Calendar of Events, better known as the Yellow Sheet, is going green. It has reached a point where electronic events scheduling is so widespread that print copies of the calendar have limited value. Moreover, the electronic version (at <http://calendar.nih.gov/>) is updated throughout the day whereas the print copy is not always current due to the time needed to reproduce and distribute thousands of copies.

The current online calendar allows users to subscribe on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Also, you can automatically add selected events to your Mac iCal (or MS Entourage for Mac) or MS Outlook Calendar. If you use a news reader (aggregator), there's an RSS feed option.

If you want a print copy, simply use the "printable version" link at the top of the display. You also have the option of printing only those events of interest to you. You can also forward one or more events to a colleague via email.

Suggestions for improvements are welcome by writing to nihcala@od.nih.gov.

Nine NIH'ers Named 2008 AAAS Fellows

Nine NIH scientists have been awarded the distinction of AAAS fellow, an honor bestowed on members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science by their peers. They are among 486 members awarded this honor because of their distinguished efforts to advance science or its applications.

From the section on biological sciences: Dr. Alan Hinnebusch, chief of NICHD's Laboratory of Gene Regulation and Development and head of the section on nutrient control of gene regulation, "For distinguished contributions to the field of molecular genetics, particularly for the elucidation of mechanisms that regulate translation of RNA."

Dr. Jennifer Lippincott-Schwartz, chief of the section on organelle biology in NICHD's Cell Biology and Metabolism Branch, "For outstanding contributions to the field of fluorescent protein imaging, particularly for the creation of photoactivatable GFP and its use in new super-resolution imaging techniques."

Dr. Samuel Wilson, recently the acting NIEHS director, "For seminal contribution to the understanding of structure-function relationships of the mammalian repair DNA polymerase-beta, elucidation of its protective role against alkylating agents and for leadership in academia."

From the section on chemistry: Dr. David Wink, senior investigator, Radiation Biology Branch, Center for Cancer Research, NCI, "For seminal and distinguished contributions to the chemical biology of the bioregulatory molecule nitric oxide and for his role as a founding member of this field."

From the section on medical sciences: Dr. Kuan-Teh Jeang, head, molecular virology section, Laboratory of Molecular Microbiology, NIAID, "For distinguished contributions to the field of human retrovirus research, particularly on HIV-1 transcription and HTLV-1 transformation."

Dr. Elizabeth Nabel, director, NHLBI, "For outstanding contributions to the field of cardiovascular molecular genetics, for creative leadership and for dedicated service as director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute."


Dr. Gary Nabel, director of NIAID's Vaccine Research Center, "For distinguished contributions to virology and immunology in his own research and for his leadership efforts to develop vaccines against HIV, Ebola and other viruses."

Dr. Snorri Thorgeirsson, head, Center of Excel-

lence for Integrative Cancer Biology and Genomics, NCI, and chief, Laboratory of Experimental Carcinogenesis, "For his pioneering work on characterizing the cellular and molecular biological aspects of liver stem cells and their role in liver carcinogenesis."

From the section on neuroscience: Dr. Jerrel Yakel, Laboratory of Neurobiology, NIEHS, "For distinguished contributions to neuroscience, particularly the role of nicotine receptors in brain function, and for his efforts in mentoring the next generation of biomedical scientists."

New fellows will be presented with an official certificate and a gold and blue (representing science and engineering, respectively) rosette pin on Feb. 14 during the 2009 AAAS annual meeting in Chicago.

AAAS is the world's largest general scientific society and publisher of the journal, *Science*. It was founded in 1848 and includes some 262 affiliated societies and academies of science, serving 10 million individuals. 



World AIDS Day Observed at Rockledge

Dr. Carl Dieffenbach (l), director of NIAID's Division of AIDS, addresses an audience of coworkers and others who had gathered at 6700B Rockledge prior to embarking on a silent walk around the water fountain in front of their office to commemorate World AIDS Day on Dec. 1.

PHOTO: JUDI MILLER

ACD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



ACD members Dr. Thomas Kelly (above) of Sloan-Kettering Institute and Dr. Mary-Claire King (at right) of the University of Washington take part in discussions at the group's recent meeting.

PHOTOS: ERNIE BRANSON

nation focused on a worldwide money crunch, financial concerns at NIH were uppermost on everyone's mind. Dr. Raynard Kington, presiding over his first ACD gathering as acting NIH director, called on NIH budget director John Bartrum to summarize the agency's current financial picture and strategies to improve its funding outlook in the near term. Bartrum said the CR would expire Mar. 6, and that NIH was operating at the FY 2008 appropriation level until a budget is passed. NIH expects an omnibus budget by late January/early February.

"In terms of the budget, these remain interesting times," Kington said. "There's been substantial congressional interest in NIH that has continued at the end of the 110th Congress."

Bartrum said the President's 2009 budget request for NIH is equal to the FY 2008 level of \$29.5 billion. The Senate version calls for about \$30.3 billion or a 3 percent increase; the House wants about \$30.4 billion. If either congressional measure passes, NIH's budget would just barely meet inflation levels calculated in the biomedical research and development price index known as the BRDPI (called "bird pie"). Updated annually by the Department of Commerce, BRDPI estimates the costs of conducting medical research.

In one of 53 Capitol Hill testimonies over the last year by NIH staff covering a wide range of topics from HIV/AIDS prevention to putting public access (to research data) into practice, Kington and other NIH officials recently made a strong case for the agency to get a portion of any economic stimulus packages Congress may pass.

Catch-Up Argument Mustered

Bartrum said a bill pending in the Senate called for NIH to receive a billion dollars of the economic stimulus package. He said the House had not yet formulated a similar bill. Mid-January would probably be the earliest that any mechanism could pass.

"We made the argument that as a result of several years of flat funding and the large number of meritorious grants that we were unable to fund, we have on the table already reviewed scientifically more than 10,000 grants that we could fund very quickly within a month or two," Kington explained. "There was a fair amount of evidence by a number of groups suggesting a direct economic impact on the community, and that it's an important long-term investment to help [NIH] get back on track in terms of funding biomedical research for the federal government."



Conceding that quite a few organizations are making the same argument, Kington said, "I think there was some traction acknowledging both the opportunities in the short run to have an impact on the economy but more importantly to get us on the road to catching up after the series of flat budgets have gotten us substantially below the BRDPI."

Investment in NIH Creates Jobs

All indications are that a stimulus package will focus on infrastructure projects, Bartrum said. With its possible \$1 billion slice, NIH could support about 2,500 to 2,700 grants, which translates into roughly 15,000 jobs (assuming a minimum of 6 jobs per grant). NIH will provide detailed data on the agency's potential to help revitalize the nation's economy—information compiled in several studies by RAND Corp. and the Department of Commerce—to ACD members for dissemination.

In discussion, ACD members offered suggestions:

- The number of *new* jobs that NIH can create with the stimulus should be emphasized, noted ACD member Dr. David Botstein of Princeton University. Also, the fact that NIH is in a position to fund these grants immediately—and have grantees hiring within a month—makes NIH's argument stronger than others vying for stimulus money.
- NIH estimates of jobs created per grant are too conservative. Students and postdocs hired—in addition to positions directly sponsored by grants—should also be estimated, which could significantly boost NIH's impact on local economies. "The average RO1 supports far more than 6 or 7 people," concluded ACD member Dr. Mary-Claire King of the University of Washington.
- The NIH-investment-equals-job-creation data should be distributed widely, beyond ACD member institutions, to universities and other academic organizations. With the economic downturn, some of these groups have instituted hiring freezes that are discouraging newly minted postdocs and other recent grads about medical research as a viable career opportunity.

Lab Report Is In

Next on the meeting's agenda was a progress report from Dr. Adel Mahmoud of Princeton, who chairs the NIH blue ribbon panel to advise on risk assessment for the Boston University National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories. The ACD commissioned the panel in March 2008 to investigate circumstances surrounding a newly built biocontainment facility in South Boston that NIH is funding through a BU Medical Center grant. NEIDL, as the lab is called, was slated to house biodefense and public health infectious disease research, but came under fire from neighbors who do not want high-containment pathogens studied in their community.

Mahmoud announced that the panel awarded a contract in September 2008 for a supplemental-risk study of infectious agents and scenarios that had been recommended by the ACD at its June 2008 meeting. The panel will oversee the study and report results in June 2009.

In the meantime, Mahmoud said, no biosafety-level 3 or BSL-4 research would be conducted at NEIDL while several court decisions are pending. Instead, the facility would be used for public safety, health and operations training. Also, he noted, the City of Boston has a regulation banning the use of BSL-4-containment recombinant DNA technology. NIH has received assurances from BUMC that all NEIDL research will fully comply with city regulations.

In Search of a Permanent Director

During the director's report, Kington commented on the transition period between permanent NIH directors. He noted that former NIH budget director Richard Turman leads HHS's transition team in the Office of the Secretary. Included among those providing guidance to a White House coordinating committee are former NIH director Dr. Harold Varmus, former NHGRI director Dr. Francis Collins and Prof. R. Alta Charo, a bioethicist at the University of Wisconsin, who has served in several advisory capacities for NIH over the years.

"This is proving to be a relatively smooth transition," Kington said, pointing out that both the incoming and outgoing administrations have made transition planning and implementation a high priority. "It really is being done in a very thoughtful and collegial way...We are cautiously optimistic that the nomination [for NIH director] will occur relatively quickly."

Video of the full meeting is archived by date at <http://videocast.nih.gov/PastEvents.asp>.

Astute Clinician Lecture To Address Marfan Syndrome

"Marfan Syndrome and Related Disorders: From Molecules to Medicine" is the Astute Clinician Lecture slated for Wednesday, Jan. 14 at 3 p.m. in Masur Auditorium, Bldg. 10. The speaker will be Dr. Harry C. Dietz, III, professor of pediatrics, medicine, molecular biology, and genetics at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He is also an investigator in the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.



Dr. Harry C. Dietz, III

Dietz heads a multidisciplinary clinic for the diagnosis and management of individuals with heritable forms of cardiovascular disease, with a special emphasis on Marfan syndrome and related connective tissue disorders. He directs the William S. Smilow Center for Marfan Syndrome Research, a group of molecular biologists focused on improvement of the lives of individuals with Marfan syndrome through the development of novel diagnostic and treatment strategies. Other research interests include the molecular basis of vessel wall homeostasis and cardiovascular aging and the mechanism and physiologic significance of mRNA quality control mechanisms in health and disease.

His awards include the Richard D. Rowe and Young Investigator Awards from the Society for Pediatric Research. He is a member of the American Society for Clinical Investigation and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was the 2006 recipient of the Curt Stern Award from the American Society of Human Genetics, the Antoine Marfan Award and the 2008 Hero with a Heart award from the National Marfan Foundation.

A graduate of Duke University, Dietz earned his M.D. degree at SUNY Upstate School of Medicine in Syracuse. At Johns Hopkins hospital, he completed an internship in pediatrics and residencies in pediatrics and anesthesia and critical care medicine. He also held a clinical fellowship in pediatric cardiology and a postdoctoral fellowship in medical genetics there.

The Astute Clinician Lecture was established through a gift from the late Dr. Robert W. Miller and his wife, Haruko. It honors a U.S. scientist who has observed an unusual clinical occurrence and, by investigating it, has opened an important new avenue of research.

The lecture is an NIH Director's Wednesday Afternoon Lecture Series event hosted by the Clinical Center. Sign language interpretation can be provided. For information or accommodation, contact Christopher Wanjek at (301) 402-4274 or wanjek@mail.nih.gov, or call the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

BIRNBAUM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



NIEHS director Dr. Linda Birnbaum

PHOTO: STEVE MCCAWE

tal issues require individual and team efforts to address the interactions between the environment and human health.”

A native of New Jersey, she earned her M.S. and Ph.D. in microbiology from the University of Illinois, Urbana. She is a board-certified toxicologist and has served as a federal scientist for nearly 29 years—the first 10 of those at NIEHS—first as a senior staff fellow at NTP, then as a principal investigator and research microbiologist and finally as leader of the institute’s chemical disposition group.

Birnbaum has received numerous awards, including the Women in Toxicology Elsevier Mentoring Award, the Society of Toxicology Public Communications Award, EPA’s Health Science Achievement Award and Diversity Leadership Award and 12 Science and Technology Achievement Awards, which reflect the recommendations of EPA’s external science advisory board, for specific publications.

The author of more than 600 peer-reviewed publications, book chapters, abstracts and reports, Birnbaum’s research focuses on the pharmacokinetic behavior of environmental chemicals; mechanisms of actions of toxicants, including endocrine disruption; and linking of real-world exposures to effects. She is also an adjunct professor in the School of Public Health, the toxicology curriculum and the department of environmental sciences and engineering at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, as well as in the integrated toxicology program at Duke University.

Birnbaum’s appointment has been well received within the scientific community, where she is a highly regarded member. She is currently president-elect of the International Union of Toxicology, the umbrella organization for toxicology societies in more than 50 countries; former president of the Society of Toxicology, the largest professional organization of toxicologists in the world; former chair of the division of toxicology at the American Society of Pharmacology and Therapeutics; and former vice president of the American Aging Association. ●

Stadtman Gift Expands, Embellishes Rock Creek Regional Park

Dr. Thressa C. Stadtman, a principal investigator in NHLBI’s Laboratory of Biochemistry, recently deeded 5.8 acres of her property to form an expansion of Rock Creek Regional Park. The land, which includes the house she shared with her husband, the late Dr. Earl Stadtman, will be known as “The Stadtman Preserve.”

On Dec. 18, the Montgomery County Planning Board unanimously approved the addition to the park in Derwood.

“I am pleased to recommend to you today to authorize the acceptance of this generous gift of real estate from Dr. Thressa C. Stadtman, which will expand Rock Creek Regional Park,” said Bill Gries, Department of Parks land acquisition specialist, at a planning board meeting.

Stadtman’s gift requires that the land not be developed and that it be managed in perpetuity as conservation parkland to maintain the existing natural resources. It also conveys the land to the Department of Parks outright and at no cost with the request that the gift tract be named The Stadtman Preserve.

“This exciting extension to the parks system offers greater protection of the natural resources of the Mill Creek and Rock Creek Stream Valley,” said Department of Parks planner Dominic Quattrocchi. “The property, directly adjacent to an important biodiversity area, meets the criteria for designation as a county Legacy Open Space natural resources site. It’s simply a beautiful property.”

The gift property is located east of Redland Rd., adjacent to Rock Creek Stream Valley Park along Mill Creek and was valued at over \$1 million in January 2006. The property features high-quality mature forest, steep slopes, floodplain, high-quality wetlands and a perennial stream. It also features approximately 1,000 azaleas and rhododendrons, planted by Dr. Earl Stadtman. The site also includes a locally significant modern movement house built in 1961 in which Dr. Thressa Stadtman currently resides and for which she will reserve a life estate as a condition of the gift.

“This is really an enormous gift that will keep on giving to future generations enjoying Rock Creek Regional Park and will help protect the watershed,” said Director of Parks Mary Bradford. “We just can’t thank Dr. Stadtman enough for her generosity.”

HERC: Herculean Tool for Recruitment

Finding a job is never easy, but finding two jobs for a dual-career couple can be extremely challenging. To make that task easier for current and potential employees, NIH has partnered with Loyola College, the University of Richmond and Washington and Lee University to establish the Mid-Atlantic Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (M-A HERC).

M-A HERC now includes 22 member institutions, including Georgetown University, American University, the University of Virginia, two campuses of the University of Maryland and the FDA.

The main component of HERC is its web site, www.midatlanticherc.org, which posts every available job at each of the member institutions. The site enables dual-career couples to link their individual areas of expertise and job requirements and search for two jobs simultaneously.


M-A HERC is part of the National HERC, which includes 10 other regional affiliates. National HERC is working with JobTarget—the firm that manages the web sites for regional HERC affiliates—to let users search job listings of multiple HERCs simultaneously, which would help job seekers look at opportunities across HERC regional borders.

The first HERC was developed in 2000 by colleges and universities in northern California. Plans for the M-A HERC were under way by late 2007 and quickly gelled because the mid-Atlantic region is so rich in colleges, universities, teaching hospitals and government agencies with a focus on research and training.

Last October, representatives of the member institutions met at Natcher Bldg. for the inaugural meeting of M-A HERC. Paula Alfone, the M-A HERC director based at Loyola College, opened the meeting, followed by NIH representatives Christine Major, director of the Office of Human Resources, and Dr. Joan Schwartz, assistant director of the Office of Intramural Research.

The main event was a talk by Ethan Bloomfield, JobTarget's vice president of sales operations. He presented the OneClick Network, a listing of national and regional job boards, web sites of professional societies, diversity-focused job boards and more. Member institutions can select up to 7 sites from the network to which to send each position announcement in addition to the M-A HERC and JobTarget will automatically post the job to those sites as well.

The day wrapped up with a roundtable dis-

ussion of how member institutions can best take advantage of the M-A HERC network. Ideas included establishing an online discussion forum and topics for future meetings such as best practices in diversity hiring and family-friendly policies.—*Joslyn Yudenfreund Kravitz* 



Dr. Julia Royall will speak about her work in Africa on Jan. 12.

PHOTO: DANIEL HAMA

Royall To Review Year in Uganda, Jan. 12

Dr. Julia Royall, NLM chief of international programs, has long worked on health issues in Africa. However, she was able to spend a full year there recently, as a Fulbright scholar, 2007-2008. On Monday, Jan. 12 at 2 p.m. in Lister Hill Auditorium, Bldg. 38A, she will share highlights from the year in a multimedia program open to the public.

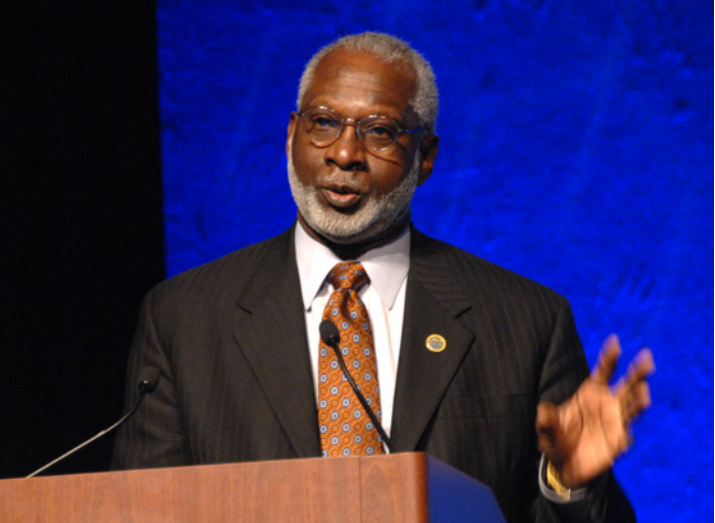
Her projects ranged from measuring knowledge about malaria in a small village without electricity to planning a videoconference between Ugandan medical students in the capital city, Kampala, and NIH malaria researchers in Bethesda. Another focal point was an interactive tutorial on malaria, presented in four local languages. Created by students, faculty and Ugandan artists and vetted by people in the village, this highly praised consumer resource, a version of MedlinePlus, now lives at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/africa. A team from the newly founded Gulu Medical School in the country's war-torn northern region is about to use the same format for a tutorial on mental health. Illustrations for this culturally sensitive program will be done by affected teens in that region.

An underlying theme for Royall during her fellowship was building human capacity and infrastructure at universities in Gulu, Kampala and other cities. She will conclude her talk with recommendations for NIH involvement in Uganda and other African nations and her thoughts on how NLM/NIH can fill the medical information gap in Uganda and beyond.



NHLBI's Pohl Wins Toxicology Award

Dr. Lance R. Pohl, chief of the section on molecular and cellular toxicology in NHLBI's Laboratory of Molecular Immunology, is the recipient of the Society of Toxicology's 2009 Distinguished Toxicology Scholar Award. For more than 30 years, he has been a leader in the field of drug toxicity. His work on the anesthetic halothane established the association between biotransformation, covalent adduct formation and immune response with idiosyncratic hepatotoxicity. His laboratory has also made several other major contributions to the field of toxicology, including the development of innovative techniques for identifying highly reactive and toxic metabolites of drugs and other xenobiotics that are produced by cytochrome P-450s and other hemoproteins and the first design and use of specific antibodies for exploring the identity and toxicologic consequences of *in vivo* protein adducts of hepatotoxic drug metabolites. In more recent years, he and his colleagues have used animal models to identify numerous cytokines and other factors that determine susceptibility to drug-induced liver injury.



SUMMIT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Top, from 1:

Former Surgeon General David Satcher, NCMHD director Dr. John Ruffin and Congressman Elijah Cummings discuss health equity issues at the summit.

Below:

Former Vermont governor Dr. Howard Dean addresses the assembly.

PHOTOS: BILL BRANSON



move beyond disparity—because I look at the world, at everything, as if it is a half-filled glass. I think the word disparity puts the weight on the already encumbered. I think if I look at it as ‘equity,’ I have a different image. [I see] more emphasis on opportunity, on seeking, with more resolve, more hope.”

Different Perspectives, Common Purpose

Dedicated to the late former U.S. Congressman Paul Rogers (D-FL), also known as “Mr. Health” for his support of medical research and his advocacy for increasing NIH funding, the summit was coordinated by NIH’s National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities. Keynote speakers, plenary and break-out sessions, an exhibit hall and scientific poster sessions were featured daily.

In keeping with the summit’s emphasis on science, practice and policy, U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD) and former Vermont governor Dr. Howard Dean addressed the assembly on day two. Day three closed the summit with a town meeting on health care reform; ideas will be submitted to President-elect Barack Obama’s administration.

The event gathered people from across the nation and beyond who can attack health gaps from myriad angles: biomedical scientists and research administrators, public health commissioners and community health care providers, diplomats from the embassies of Botswana, China, France, India and Peru and university professors and deans from tribal colleges—all with a shared goal.

“You come with unique perspectives, strategies, experiences from different backgrounds, disciplines, communities and countries but you come with a common vision that we can and one day we will eliminate health disparities,” said NCMHD director Dr. John Ruffin, opening the 3-day meeting. “Today, health disparities

is a vibrant part of research...stronger than it has ever been. We’re making scientific progress. Our communities are now engaged in research. No longer is it just the traditional academic scientists. Community and faith-based groups are on board.”

Acting NIH director Dr. Raynard Kington announced perhaps the biggest news on day one: NCMHD will now have an intramural research component.

“The NCMHD intramural research program will conduct state-of-the-art research focusing on the links between biological and nonbiological determinants of health,” he said. “It will create training and mentorship opportunities...it will contribute a pool of early-stage and seasoned investigators that will enhance the diversity of scientists and research disciplines comprising the intramural research program at NIH. As we look forward to a future in which everyone in this nation has the same likelihood of a healthy and long life, we can be confident that the NCMHD intramural research program will contribute significantly toward creating that future.”

New Times, New Tools

Kington put the pursuit of health equity in historical context, contrasting the field’s current status with its humble origins circa 1896. “We now have at our disposal more nimble and nuanced methods for studying health disparities and for understanding their causes,” he said, recalling that scholar and civil rights pioneer W.E.B. DuBois is often credited with pointing out the differences in health status among black and white citizens in the late 19th century.

“We have expanded the scope of policy studies,” Kington continued. “We are supported in our efforts by institutions such as NCMHD that embody our resolve and give it voice and direction...The very popularity of this summit, the convergence of people and institutions it has affected, allows us to believe that we are finally in a position to move forward with science policy and practice of eliminating health disparities in a way that would have made DuBois proud.”



Top, from l:
Former acting surgeon general Dr. Kenneth Moritsugu, who is now with Johnson & Johnson, and Dr. Robert Valdez of the University of New Mexico give keynotes at the summit.

Honored guests seated on the stage at the summit included former Surgeon General David Satcher (who also moderated a summit forum on HD, science and policy); former HHS secretary Dr. Louis Sullivan; and two former NIH directors, Drs. Bernadine Healy and Harold Varmus. All four were recognized for their distinct roles in creating NCMHD and their early acknowledgment of the importance of research on gaps in health status.

Lessons Learned

Now president of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, Varmus talked about lessons he's learned since leaving NIH and helping start a community cancer clinic in an inner-city environment. Noting the poorer outcomes, lower life expectancy and greater disease burden among blacks and Hispanics in Harlem, he said, "I urge all of you who are coming to New York to pay a visit to [Ralph Lauren Cancer Care and Prevention Center] and learn some of the realities of trying to practice health disparities care and research in a disadvantaged community. Learn about the difficulties in getting state funding for reimbursement for such activities and the cultural difficulties of educating and

getting the participation of the surrounding communities that are so much in need."

Varmus also called attention to gaps in health around the world. He said recently released results of an Institute of Medicine study show imbalances in health globally. Varmus challenged summit attendees to support IOM's efforts to help improve health internationally.

"These are exciting times," Ruffin concluded. "We're at a turning point as a nation and a global community when there is profound momentum around health disparities, but we cannot become complacent...Our approach to health disparities cannot be static. We must continue to challenge ourselves, to take new bold steps through bona fide solutions. It is time for us to chart a new course for health disparities. For that reason, the intersection and integration of science, practice and policy is the theme of the summit...The elimination of health disparities will indeed take leadership. It will take vision, it will take creativity. It will take passion and most of all, it will take partnership."

Some video highlights of the summit are archived at http://www.kaisernet.org/health_cast/hcast_index.cfm.

Below:
Angelou, for whom the Maya Angelou Center for Health Equity at Wake Forest University School of Medicine is named, punctuates her remarks with laughter.



At left, Clayton Old Elk of the Indian Health Service greets Dr. Dorothy Height of the National Council of Negro Women. Above, former NIH directors Dr. Harold Varmus and Dr. Bernadine Healy are recognized for their early recognition of the need to study health gaps among minority and underserved populations. The summit brought together more than 4,400 participants and included plenary talks as well as workshops and a scientific poster and exhibit session.

Presidential Award Recognizes 12 Associated with NIH

By Raymond MacDougall

Twelve NIH-associated scientists, including two intramural researchers at the National Human Genome Research Institute, have received the 2007 Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE). The awards were made at a White House ceremony on Dec. 19 and were among 60 presented to young scientists funded by federal agencies.

Honorees from NHGRI are Dr. Daphne W. Bell, investigator in the Cancer Genetics Branch, and Dr. Elliott Margulies of the Genome Technology Branch.

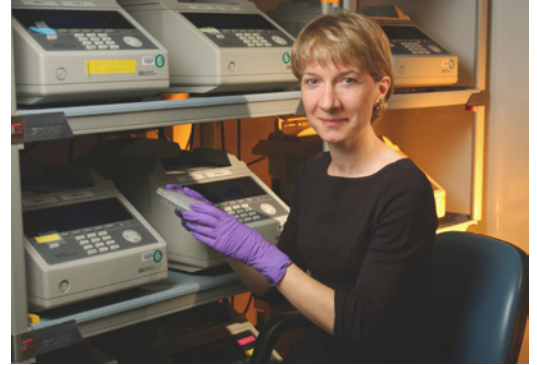
“The PECASE award is a major honor that identifies young researchers at the vanguard of science, and who are expected to be rising stars,” said Dr. Alan Guttmacher, acting director of NHGRI. “Every recipient can be duly proud of being selected; Dr. Bell and Dr. Margulies are to be commended for achieving this recognition in pursuit of research at NHGRI.”

PECASE has been conferred annually since 1996 and is the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on outstanding scientists and engineers early in their independent careers. Selection is based on the combination of innovative research at the frontiers of science and technology and community service demonstrated through scientific leadership and community outreach.

“With this award, Dr. Bell’s cancer research and Dr. Margulies’ bioinformatics expertise are being recognized by the highest office in the United States,” said Dr. Eric Green, NHGRI scientific director. “This is a real feather in their caps and an honor for the NHGRI Division of Intramural Research.”

Bell, who reacted with surprise to the news of her selection, is a cancer geneticist. “I was astounded,” she said. “This is a real honor.” Her research aims to identify the genetic changes that are involved in endometrial cancer, the most commonly diagnosed gynecological malignancy in the U.S., killing some 7,500 American women each year. Using sophisticated approaches, including DNA sequencing technology, she compares the sequence and number of genes in tumors and healthy tissue from endometrial cancer patients to hunt for mutations and other genetic changes that have led to tumor development.

“In endometrial cancer, we are searching for changes in genes that signal to a cell when it should divide and when it should die,” she explained. When these signals are disrupted, nor-



Dr. Daphne W. Bell

mal cells may start to divide uncontrollably, forming a tumor. “There are drugs in development that can shut off the faulty signal,” she added. “The key is to find the faulty genes.” An exciting prospect in her research is the chance that genes altered in endometrial cancer are potentially the same as those altered in other forms of cancer.

“What we appreciate now is that there won’t be one kind of genetic change that causes all endometrial cancers,” she said, offering that it is necessary to identify the gene signatures present in a specific patient’s tumor so that therapies can be tailored to each patient. “This illustrates the importance of understanding the genetic changes that cause cancer and using that information to think about ways to develop personalized treatment approaches.”

Bell, a native of County Armagh in Northern Ireland, completed her bachelor’s degree in genetics and zoology and her Ph.D. in biology and biochemistry at Queen’s University in Belfast. She conducted postdoctoral research at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia and served as an assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. She joined NHGRI in 2006.

Margulies is a tenure-track investigator at NHGRI, where he uses high-performance, computational analyses and laboratory-based, high-throughput genomic methods to decipher DNA sequence and genome function. “This award would not have been possible without the phenomenal mentorship and resources that have been available to me at NIH,” he said.

With an undergraduate degree in biotechnology from Rutgers University and a Ph.D. in human genetics from the University of Michigan, Margulies arrived at NHGRI in 2001 as a postdoctoral fellow. His research has focused on the development of bioinformatic approaches for identifying and characterizing regions of the human genome that are evolutionarily con-



Dr. Elliott Margulies

served across multiple species. Genomic regions conserved over evolutionary time tend to be important for the survival of the organism; studying them provides crucial insights into the workings of a genome.

Margulies develops bioinformatic tools for analyzing the wealth of data that is being generated by genomic research today. "Over the last few years, we have seen a tremendous rise in the amount of DNA being sequenced because of increased speed and decreased costs," he explained. "As tremendous as that has been, it is just the beginning of where we're going. We already see that the bottleneck is bioinformatics and analysis."

Projecting the prospects for his field, Margulies has his eyes set on the expansive growth of data to be generated in the coming years when sequencing an individual's genome will no longer be technologically or fiscally prohibitive. "The amount of sequence data to analyze will be large; we're trying to prepare for that," he said, noting that the NIH Intramural Sequencing Center operates around the clock and can fill a terabyte of disk space with new DNA sequence that is generated in just 3 days. "My hope is that genome sequencing and assembly becomes so common that we can use it to help patients."

The NIH extramural grantees also celebrating receipt of 2007 PECASE awards include the following 10 investigators: Dr. Thomas Blanpied, NIMH, University of Maryland, Baltimore; Dr. Kevin Eggan, NICHD, Harvard University; Dr. Raymond Habas, NIGMS, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey; Dr. Amy Heimberger, NCI, University of Texas; Dr. James Iatridis, NIAMS, University of Vermont; Dr. Francis Lee, NINDS, Cornell University; Dr. Michael MacCross, NIDDK, University of Washington; Dr. Suchitra Nelson, NIDCR, Case Western Reserve University; Dr. Laura O'Dell, NIDA, University of Texas, El Paso; and Dr. Li Zhang, NIDCD, University of Southern California. 🗣️

Clinical Center Raises Over \$7,000 for CFC

It was a lucky day for many on Dec. 4 when the Clinical Center picked 19 winners for their Combined Federal Campaign themed baskets. This year, different departments in the CC created gift baskets through staff donation to be won in a drawing open to NIH staff, patients, families and visitors. Proceeds from the drawing went to the winners' CFC charity of choice; more than \$7,000 was collected.

With the country facing an economic downturn, the CFC is more important than ever to the thousands of nonprofit organizations that rely on CFC donations. During times of economic hardship, the demand for charitable work is expanding and, at the same time, the charitable giving from corporations and the private sector may drop.

The Clinical Center drawing, and the many other CFC events and activities, are creative ways to remind NIH employees that they have the chance to give. NIH has a strong tradition of giving generously to the CFC.

As the campaign nears its end, NIH is at more than 80 percent of its \$2.2 million goal. There is still time to give. NIH will accept contributions through January 2009. You can still ensure your favorite charities are receiving a steady stream of funding throughout the year by giving through payroll deduction. The CFC has found that people can afford to give more than three to four times as much through payroll deduction than they do when making a direct cash gift. For more information on the CFC, contact your keyworker or <http://cfc.nih.gov>.



Left:

CC Executive Officer Maureen Gormley (l) and Debbie Byram, deputy CFC coordinator for the CC, get help with the drawing from Sydnie Gapper, 3, whose dad is a patient.

Below:

Showing off gift basket treasures are CC employees (from l) Josette Blocker of the pharmacy department and Nicole Jackson and Vernessa Gibson, both from nursing and patient care services.





Dr. Regina Benjamin, a past NCMHD advisory council member, was recently named a 2008 MacArthur Foundation fellow.

Former NCMHD Council Member Benjamin Named 'Genius'

By George Strait

Dr. Regina Benjamin, a past member of the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities advisory council and founder of the Bayou La Batre Rural Health Clinic serving a Gulf Coast fishing community in Alabama, has been named a 2008 MacArthur Foundation fellow. The so-called "genius" award provides \$500,000 in no-strings support over the next 5 years.

Described by the foundation as a rural family physician who has forged an inspiring model of compassionate and effective medical care in one of the most underserved regions of the U.S., Benjamin said, "This wonderful honor really came as a total surprise. I was rushing out of the door that morning when I got a phone call from a total stranger who said I was being given \$500,000 to do with as I wished!"

Bayou La Batre, Ala., is a village of about 2,500 residents. Hurricanes Georges (1998) and Katrina (2005) devastated it twice in the past decade. Despite scarce resources, Benjamin painstakingly rebuilt her clinic after each disaster and set up networks to maintain contact with patients who were scattered by the storms. Her family practice treats all incoming patients, many of whom are uninsured. She frequently travels by pickup truck to care for the most isolated and immobile in her region.

Benjamin, who attended Morehouse School of Medicine and received her M.D. in 1984 from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, is a skilled researcher as well. She is a member of the Dartmouth COOP Practice Based Research Network that translates research on preventive health measures into accessible, community-based interventions. She uses these techniques to decrease the disease burdens of her diverse patient base—immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, who comprise a third of Bayou La Batre's population. She served on NCMHD's advisory council from 2003 to 2007.

"We at NCMHD could not be more proud of Dr. Benjamin or more pleased that her great work has been recognized in this way," said Dr. John Ruffin, NCMHD director. "For this quiet leader,

the genius of her work lies in the choices she has made: to serve the underserved, to be a voice for those who have none and to work tirelessly to develop ways to eliminate health disparities."

So what is Benjamin going to do with the money? "I simply want to make a difference with it," she said. First, she is designing a pipeline project: scholarships of \$500 each for 4 students a year, to encourage them to go into health careers. The project will focus on sixth graders with the scholarship being presented at their sixth grade graduation ceremony. "This means a lot to rural and minority kids and their parents," said Benjamin. "Also the program builds off ideas on how to eliminate health disparities that I was proud to be part of when I was on NCMHD's council."



Tompkins To Lead NIGMS Branch

Dr. Laurie Tompkins is the new chief of the Genetic Mechanisms Branch in the NIGMS Division of Genetics and Developmental Biology.

She has been a program director in the branch since 1999. Before then, she was a professor in the Temple University department of biology, where she conducted NIH- and NSF-funded research on the genetics of *Drosophila* reproductive behavior.

The Genetic Mechanisms Branch supports basic research in areas ranging from DNA replication, recombination and repair to population genetics and evolution.

"Dr. Tompkins has a wealth of knowledge about basic genetics, a deep appreciation of the issues facing the extramural scientific community and a broad understanding of NIGMS and NIH policies and practices," said division director Dr. Judith Greenberg. "These strengths will serve her well in leading the branch and charting its future directions."

In addition to leading the branch and managing grant portfolios in the areas of transcription and behavioral genetics, Tompkins will continue to serve as NIGMS coordinator for genomics resources for model organisms and to represent NIGMS on the NIH Neuroscience Blueprint and zebrafish coordinating committees. She will also maintain her role in the trans-NIH EUREKA initiative, which she co-designed as a new

way to fund exceptionally innovative, potentially high-impact research.

In recent years, Tompkins has participated in a variety of other activities, including the STEP program and the genomics working group. In 2005, she worked with the State Department and the Postal Service to change a postal law that prevented the shipment of *Drosophila* cultures from one country to another.

Tompkins earned a Ph.D. in biology with a concentration in genetics from Princeton University. She conducted postdoctoral research in neurogenetics in Dr. Jeffrey Hall's laboratory at Brandeis University. She has received two NIH Director's Awards and several honors recognizing her skill in communicating science to lay audiences and her teaching ability. She is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a member of the Genetics Society of America.



OACU Chief Taylor Says Goodbye at Retirement Party

By Jan Ehrman

Surrounded by 80 well-wishers, including family, colleagues and friends, Dr. James F. Taylor, director of the Office of Animal Care and

Use (OACU) for the past 17 years, said goodbye to NIH at a retirement reception held Dec. 5 at the Cloister, Bldg. 60.

Taylor directed the office that provides regulatory and policy guidance on the appropriate and humane use of animals in research. A veterinarian, he received board certification in laboratory animal medicine in 1975. He graduated from Ohio State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and earned a master's degree in radiation biology from the University of Rochester.

Upon graduating from college, Taylor joined the Army and assumed positions overseeing animal care and the safe use of animals in military research laboratories. During his time with the armed forces, he was stationed for 2 years in Taiwan, an experience he calls "exhilarating."

Drawing upon and following his service experience, Taylor joined NIH and OACU in 1988, becoming its director 3 years later. His staff acknowledges and appreciates his myriad accomplishments.

"Through his many years as the OACU director, Dr. Taylor has touched thousands of individuals with his hands-on manner and willingness to share his thoughts, opinions and knowledge," said Dr. Terri Clark, deputy director of OACU. "He has single-handedly shaped the knowledge and abilities of many individuals that have supported animal research within the intramural program over these years."

Present at the reception were Dr. Michael Gottesman, NIH deputy director for intramural research, and his assistant Dr. Richard Wyatt, both of whom expressed their gratitude and appreciation for Taylor's tremendous contribution to NIH's Intramural Animal Program and to ensuring that the agency met the highest standards in the welfare of animals in the research setting. A number of chairpersons from the animal care and use committees and animal program directors from various institutes, with whom Taylor worked closely over the years, also attended.

Taylor was presented with a sterling silver key ring and tie tack bearing the OACU logo. In addition, in recognition of his passion for fast cars, friends and colleagues handed him a certificate enabling the auto buff to drive 10 laps around Dover International Speedway in an authentic race car.

In retirement, Taylor, a Derwood resident, also hopes to pursue some of his other hobbies including photography, using computers and listening to music. He said he may also do some traveling with his wife of 47 years, Patti, whom he refers to as "his greatest support."

NIAMS's Austin Receives ARHP Honor

Dr. Janet Austin (l), director of the NIAMS Office of Communications and Public Liaison, received the Addie Thomas Service Award from the Association of Rheumatology Health Professionals at its annual scientific meeting in San Francisco recently. The award, presented in honor of ARHP's first president, recognizes individuals who have volunteered with local, regional and national arthritis-related activities. Austin has been a member of ARHP for 20 years and has served in a number of leadership positions including as chair of the program subcommittee. She is nationally recognized in the rheumatology community as a motivational speaker, combining her personal experience with rheumatoid arthritis with a professional commitment to improving the lives of people affected by rheumatic diseases. Joining her in the photo is NIAMS director Dr. Stephen Katz.



ORS's Wilson Wins Wedum Award

Dr. Deborah Wilson, director of the Division of Occupational Health and Safety, ORS, won the Arnold G. Wedum Distinguished Achievement Award from the American Biological Safety Association at its annual Biological Safety Conference in Reno recently. The award is given to a current ABSA member for outstanding contributions to biological safety accomplished through teaching, research, service or leadership. The association cited Wilson's work with the WHO Collaborating Center for Applied Biosafety Research and Training; she is directing the training of laboratory workers throughout the world on biosafety principles and practices. ①

New Genetic Risk Factors Involved in Adult, Childhood Obesity

An international consortium, in search of the genetic risk factors for obesity, has identified six new genetic variants associated with BMI, or

body mass index, a measurement that compares height to weight. The results, funded in part by NIH, were published online in the journal *Nature Genetics* on Dec. 14. The effect of each individual genetic variant was modest and the authors state in the paper that their findings have uncovered only a small fraction of what are probably hundreds of regions in the human genome that are likely to have minor contributions to obesity. The paper estimates that the 1 percent of people harboring the most obesity-causing variants will be an

average of 10 pounds heavier than the 1 percent of individuals with the fewest variants, and 4 pounds heavier than a typical person.

The research team tested and compared BMI data and genetic information from more than 32,000 individuals of European ancestry pooled from 15 genome-wide association studies, in the end identifying 35 genetic variants. These genetic variants were further tested for validation in more than 50,000 additional individuals, also of European ancestry. Genetic variants in six genes were shown to be strongly associated with BMI. All six were found to be activated in the central nervous system, specifically the brain and hypothalamus. Prior studies have demonstrated the role of the central nervous system in body weight regulation, including appetite, energy expenditure and other behavioral aspects. The results are consistent with outcomes from family and twin studies, which suggest that genetic factors may account for as much as 40 to 70 percent of BMI variation in the general population.

NCI Launches Tool to Predict Colorectal Cancer Risk

A new online tool for calculating colorectal cancer risk in men and women age 50 or older has been launched, based on a new risk-assessment

model developed by researchers at NCI. The tool may assist health care providers and their patients in making informed choices about when and how to screen for colorectal cancer and can be used in designing colorectal cancer screening and prevention trials. An article describing the work appeared online Dec. 29 in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

Using easily obtainable information (e.g., personal and family medical history, lifestyle behaviors and age), the tool provides an estimate of an individual's risk of developing colorectal cancer over certain time periods (within 5 years, 10 years, and over the course of a lifetime). This risk-assessment model is the first to provide an absolute risk estimate for colorectal cancer (i.e., the probability of developing colorectal cancer over a given period of time) for the general, non-Hispanic white population age 50 or older in the United States. The tool is available at www.cancer.gov/colorectalcancerrisk. People using it should consult their health care providers to interpret results. Approximately one in 18 Americans will develop colorectal cancer at some point during his or her lifetime. In 2008, an estimated 148,810 people were diagnosed with colorectal cancer in the United States and another 49,960 will die of the disease.

Common Treatment for Prostatitis Fails

Alfuzosin, a drug commonly prescribed for men with chronic prostatitis, a painful disorder of the prostate and surrounding pelvic area, failed to significantly reduce symptoms in recently diagnosed men who had not been previously treated with this drug, according to a clinical trial sponsored by NIDDK. The study is to be published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Chronic prostatitis, which has no known cause and no uniformly effective therapy, is the most common type of prostatitis seen by physicians. Men with this condition experience pain in the genital and urinary tract areas, lower urinary tract symptoms such as pain in the bladder area and during urination, and sexual problems that can severely affect their quality of life. Population-based surveys estimate that 6 percent to 12 percent of men have prostatitis-like symptoms.



An international consortium, in search of genetic risk factors for obesity, has identified six new genetic variants associated with body mass index.



The phone numbers for more information about the studies below are 1-866-444-2214 (TTY 1-866-411-1010) unless otherwise noted.

Allergies in Children

NIH Pediatric Clinic offers allergy and asthma care (ages 3 months to 18 years) and is also conducting an allergy and asthma study. All study-related tests and procedures will be provided at no cost. Parental permission and child agreement are required. Refer to study 05-l-0084.

Smart Pill

Healthy adults 18-60 are asked to consider participating in an NIH study testing new method to measure gastric acid output. Compensation is provided. Refer to study 08-DK-0138.

Pelvic Pain

Healthy women ages 30-50 needed for a study that investigates the role of hormones and genes in pelvic pain and explore better approaches to treatment. Compensation is provided. Refer to study 04-CH-0056.

Twins Study

NIH is seeking same-sex fraternal twins 5-20 years old to participate in a study of children's brain development. Compensation is provided. Refer to study 89-M-0006.

Tourette Syndrome Study

Do you have Tourette syndrome? Join a study exploring the sensory experience that occurs before tics. Refer to study 08-N-0215.

Healthy Volunteers Needed

Healthy volunteers are needed for a study designed for the collection of stem cells from blood of adult humans for use in research studies. Researchers are studying adult stem cells to gain insight into blood diseases. If you are 18 or older, consider participating in this study. All study-related tests are provided at no cost. Compensation is provided. Refer to study 06-DK-0142.

Adolescent Girls Overeating

Parents, is your daughter's eating out of control? Consider having her participate in an NIH study on teen weight prevention. This study is for girls ages 12-17 who are above average weight and report loss of control eating. This study will test how effective group programs are in the prevention of excess weight gain. Participants will be compensated. Refer to study 08-CH-0139.

Neck Pain Study Needs Volunteers

Are you a healthy individual with or without neck pain? If you are between the ages of 18 and 65, you may be eligible to participate in an NIH neck pain study and receive a comprehensive cervical musculoskeletal examination without compensation. This is a 3-month natural history study, not a treatment study. For more information, email neckpainstudy@gmail.com or call (301) 451-7514. Refer to study 02-CC-0245.



Former NINDS director Dr. Zach Hall (r) is greeted by Dr. Stan Froehner of the University of Washington during Zach Fest.

'Zach Fest'

NINDS Honors Past Director Hall

More than 100 friends, family and colleagues attended Zach Fest, a symposium celebrating the career of past NINDS director Dr. Zach Hall at the Lister Hill Center recently. Hall spent most of his career as a neuroscientist at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), and Harvard, and was director of NINDS from 1994 to 1997.

Other noteworthy positions in his career included: head of the UCSF neuroscience program; chair of UCSF's department of physiology; co-founder of its program in biomedical science; UCSF vice and executive vice chancellor of research; senior associate dean and director of the Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute at the Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California; and president of the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine.

Throughout his career, Hall's research focused on the molecular function and development of the neuromuscular junction as a prototype of synapses in the brain. He was one of the founding editors of the journal *Neuron* and wrote and edited a widely used textbook, *An Introduction to Molecular Neurobiology*.

In recognition of his contributions to biomedical research training, the Zach W. Hall Student Award Fund has been established in the Neuroscience Institute at Morehouse School of Medicine. The purpose is to continue Hall's legacy of outreach and student support at Morehouse.



Turning African 'Brain Drain' into 'Brain Gain'

By Ira Allen

Converting a brain drain into a "brain gain" occupied science leaders from sub-Saharan nations, Africans who now work in U.S. labs and NIH leadership at a recent summit on African research cosponsored by the Fogarty International Center, the National Cancer Institute and the National Human Genome Research Institute.

The conference on campus drew more than 100 people, including representatives from 25 of the 27 institutes and centers and came 2 weeks before the worldwide health research gathering in Bamako, Mali. In Bamako, health ministers urged countries to spend at least 2 percent of their health budgets on research and 5 percent on charities.

Dr. Charles Rotimi, the Nigerian-born-and-educated director of the NIH Center for Research on Genomics and Global Health, noted the high level of research that is already going on in the region and asked the central question: "How do we change from a brain drain to a brain gain for the region?"

The imperative to strengthen the scientific research enterprise stems from sub-Saharan Africa's high level of disease, low level of trained medical professionals and actual decline in life expectancy in recent years, said Dr. Roderic Pettigrew, director of the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering.

The challenge, he said, is "the retention of trained medical professionals...to induce them to return to their home countries, where the need is even greater."

NIH has had a long-standing relationship with African researchers both as a result of extramural grant funding as well as its intramural program, said FIC director Dr. Roger Glass. The goal of the meeting was to better understand specific actions NIH could take to bolster the scientific research enterprise in the poorest countries of the continent, including making use of the expatriate scientists.

"As development agencies and private foundations recognize the relationship between health and development, we must establish more systematic working arrangements between academic health centers and these organizations to more fully integrate biomedical and behavioral research into health and assistance programs," said Dr. Raynard Kington, NIH acting director. "This can only happen if we create more opportunities for scientist-to-scientist interactions, facilitate institutional capacity-building and gather sufficient knowledge of one another to take hold of every available scientific opportunity."

The shortage of mentors and innovative technology outside their home institutions and countries is a powerful lure for the best young African scientists to pursue careers in America or high-income countries, especially when African governments may not put public health or scientific research high on national agendas, participants said.

Dr. Richard G. Wyatt, deputy director of NIH's intramural program, said only a small percentage of the more than 3,000 foreign postdocs on campus are from Africa. He suggested adopting a program modeled on the 40-year-old U.S.-Japan Cooperative Medical Sciences Program. 🗨️

Left:

Dr. Richard G. Wyatt (l) of the Office of Intramural Research makes a point at the Fogarty-sponsored summit on sub-Saharan Africa. Also shown are Dr. Onesmo ole-MoiYoi (c) of Kenya and NIAID director Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Join the HHS Mentoring Program

NIH wants you to join the HHS Mentoring Program. Those interested in serving as mentors and mentees across the NIH community are invited to join the 2009 program.

As part of NIH and HHS's commitment to promoting continuous development and enhancing performance at all levels, permanent federal employees are encouraged to participate. Building a confidential, interactive relationship is the cornerstone of this program. The emphasis on developing leadership and management competencies at various levels will ensure a beneficial experience for both mentors and mentees.

Program components include an online search-and-match system to connect individuals, a mentor-mentee orientation, a year-long mentoring relationship commitment and program events and resources to enhance and facilitate dialogue and growth. Individuals can participate as both mentors and mentees, and can choose senior-to-junior or peer-to-peer mentoring relationships. Mentors can expect the minimum 20-hour annual mentor time commitment to be very manageable, with ample opportunities for both mentors and mentees to be more involved in the program's activities.

As a tool in employee development, the HHS Mentoring Program does not supplant the NIH scientific mentoring and customized IC leadership mentoring programs that are available to employees in some institutes and centers. Instead, it fills an existing need and enables NIH-wide or even HHS-wide relationships. If you are interested in being mentored or mentoring another individual at NIH, discuss with your supervisor the possibility of participation in the 2009-2010 program.

For more information, including links to online registration and information session dates, visit http://learningsource.od.nih.gov/HHS_Mentoring.html.