

Network of Minority Research Investigators

NMRI News
Fall 2008



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DIABETES AND DIGESTIVE
AND KIDNEY DISEASES

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Fall 2008 Newsletter

A Message From the NIDDK Director

Welcome to the inaugural issue of NMRI News from the Network of Minority Research Investigators (NMRI), a vitally important program for current and potential medical research investigators and technical personnel from traditionally underserved communities.

NIDDK's research mission encompasses some of the most common, severe, and disabling conditions affecting Americans of all ages and racial and ethnic groups and spanning the full spectrum of medicine. We aim to maintain vigorous investigator-initiated research, to support basic and clinical research, to train and nurture talented new investigators, and to disseminate science-based information to health care providers and patients.

Many diseases that are the focus of our research programs disproportionately affect racial and ethnic minorities, and we are pleased to support NMRI and other efforts to help us address these health disparities.

Wherever you are in your career path, you can play a vital role in understanding and reducing health disparities and improving the health of all Americans. If you are already involved with NMRI, thank you! If you are not yet a member, please consider it.

Griffin P. Rodgers, M.D., M.A.C.P.
Director, NIDDK
National Institutes of Health (NIH)



A Message From Dr. Agodoa

An important step in the fight to eliminate health disparities includes developing and sustaining adequate numbers of minority faculty at academic institutions. In addition to their leading role in posing and pursuing important and relevant research questions that will ultimately lead to elimination of inequities in health and health care, the minority faculty at the academic institutions also serve as role models, encouraging and attracting the younger generation into the biomedical research field to carry on the fight to eliminate health disparities.

Since 2001 a group of dedicated minority faculty in institutions across the country have worked very closely with the NIDDK staff to form the Network of Minority Research Investigators (NMRI). They have convened and participated in the yearly National Workshops as well as Regional mini conferences. Their major focus has been to explore opportunities and improve survival of the minority academic faculty. The senior members have been important and successful mentors and role models for the junior members of the Network. This fruitful relationship has led to new grant funding of many of the members.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Institute to express our gratitude to the Executive Committee and the current members of the Oversight and Planning (both National and Regional) Committees for their tireless efforts in making this Network a success. We dedicate this inaugural NMRI News to our Network leaders.

Lawrence Agodoa, M.D., F.A.C.P.
Director, Office of Minority Health Research Coordination, NIDDK/NIH



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Seventh Annual NMRI Workshop Held on April 24 - 25, 2008

Ninety-one NMRI members attended NMRI's Seventh Annual Workshop at the Hilton Washington DC/Rockville Executive Meeting Center on April 24 - 25, 2008.

In the words of one of the participants, "The program provided a wonderful overview to the world of research and grantsmanship." In addition to giving NMRI members opportunities to network with their colleagues, the workshop featured a variety of career-enhancing activities, including mock study sections, in which participants were given a bird's eye view of the grant application review process, and focused sessions on career-oriented topics, such as preparing an NIH grant application and budget; obtaining grant funding from foundations; surviving academic politics; maximizing your laboratory's efficiency and effectiveness; and recruiting, retaining, and releasing staff.

A highlight of the program was the dinner speech by eminent medical historian **Vanessa Northington Gamble, M.D., Ph.D.**, Professor of Medical Humanities at George Washington University, on "What Can Researchers Learn from the U.S. Public Health Syphilis Study at Tuskegee?" Participants described this speech as "superb" and "outstanding," and noted that it clearly demonstrated the importance of ethical conduct among researchers.

The presentation on "Overcoming Barriers to Minority Involvement in Health Research: Engaging and Educating the Minority Research Subject," by **Keith Norris, M.D.**, Vice President for Research of Charles R. Drew University of Medicine



The 2008 NMRI Annual Meeting Steering Committee (from left: Keith Norris, Bessie Young, Larry Agodoa, Carlos Azziz, Winnie Martinez, Healani Chang, and Eddie Greene)

and Science, also received rave reviews from the meeting participants. As one participant noted, Dr. Norris provided a "unique perspective on an often-overlooked area in research."

Other highlights of the annual workshop included state-of-the-art scientific sessions on the genetics of Type 2 diabetes, presented by **Clifton Bogardus, M.D.**, Chief of the Phoenix Epidemiology and Clinical Research Branch of NIDDK; on the genetics of kidney disease, presented by **Michelle Winn, M.D.**, Assistant Professor in the Center for Human Genetics at Duke University, and **Rebekah Rasooly, Ph.D.**, Deputy Director of the Division of Kidney, Urologic, and Hematologic Diseases at NIDDK; and on nutrition and obesity, presented by **Carolyn Miles, Ph.D.**, Director of NIDDK's Clinical Obesity and Nutrition Program.

A special feature of the meeting was a series of presentations on the role of scientific societies and professional organizations

in promoting minority research and minority investigators. After hearing about the programs offered by the Endocrine Society, American Heart Association, American Society of Transplantation, and American Diabetes Association, many meeting participants reported that they had learned about funding opportunities and mentoring programs that they had not previously been aware of, and some said that they planned to join one of these organizations and become involved in its activities.

At the end of the workshop, when attendees were asked whether they would be back next year, most gave a resounding "Yes." If you did not attend this year's workshop, be sure not to miss next year's, which will feature even greater opportuni-

ties for networking and an increased focus on American Indian and Hispanic health issues, as well as scientific sessions and practical career guidance. Information about the next annual workshop, scheduled for **April 23-24, 2009**, in the Bethesda, Maryland area, will be sent to NMRI members sometime in late fall of 2008.

SAVE THE DATE:

Announcing the NMRI 8th Annual Meeting, April 23-24, 2009, Bethesda, Maryland

Check at <http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov/workshops/> as information becomes available.

NMRI Annual Meeting Features 22 Poster Presentations

The poster session at the NMRI Annual Meeting was one of the highlights of the event. Participants were impressed with the quality of the posters, and the opportunity to prepare and present a poster provided a valuable experience for the

young scientists who shared their research findings in this way.

One presenter noted, "I can't believe how much I enjoyed presenting a poster. I was encouraged to do so by senior members... and am really happy I brought one. Good interaction with those who came to view my poster."

The posters covered a wide variety of topics. Some focused on practical, clinical research, such as the presentation by **Zoila Vichot Sánchez, Ph.D.**, on improving health care delivery for Hispanic patients with diabetes in Tennessee, and the presentation by **Shirley A. Blanchard, Ph.D.**, on nutrition and physical activity among Boys and Girls Club members in Omaha. Others reported on cutting-edge basic



Dr. Rocio Pereira discusses her poster with Dr. Ricardo Azziz, Chair of the Meeting

science, such as the presentation on the role of B cells in renal fibrosis by **Jesús M. López-Guisa, Ph.D.**, and his colleagues, and the presentation by **Titus A. Reaves, Ph.D.**, and his colleagues on epithelial-dependent antigen interactions at the luminal surface of the large intestine.

Awards were presented for exemplary poster presentations in three areas—Basic, Clinical, and Translational Science. Congratulations to the winners:

- ◆ *Basic Science:* **Kirk N. Campbell, M.D.**, for the presentation on “Nuclear Relocation of the Nephron and CD2AP-Binding Protein Dendrin Promotes Apoptosis of Podocytes.”
- ◆ *Clinical Science:* **Hector Carbajal, M.D.**, for the presentation on “Pretransplant Monoclonal Gammopathy of Undetermined Significance (MGUS) as a High-Risk Factor for Kidney Transplantation.”

- ◆ *Translational Science:* **Daniel Moralejo, D.V.M., Ph.D.**, for the presentation on “Delivery of Encapsulated Vascular Smooth Muscle Cells (VSMC) Expressing Glucagon-Like Peptide-1 (GLP-1) to Treat Type 2 Diabetes in Dr. *lepr/lepr* Rats.”



2008 NMRI Annual Meeting Poster Winners

Mentoring: A Key to Success in Academia

Finding a good mentor can mean the difference between success and failure in academia, as **Daisy DeLeon, Ph.D.**, emphasized in her presentation at the NMRI annual meeting. Mentors can give their mentees practical guidance on how to develop their academic careers, as well as providing encouragement, instilling confidence, and supporting their mentees' successes.

Promoting mentoring relationships is one of NMRI's most important goals. In the months to come, the NMRI Oversight

Committee will be working toward this goal by developing a database of members, including areas of interest and society affiliations. This will allow the establishment of mentor-mentee pairs to work on specific objectives, with the ability to track outcomes.

Although mentors and mentees would ideally come from the same institution, arrangements can also be made to find mentors for young researchers working at smaller institutions, where local mentors may not be available. The Committee

has developed a Mentor Agreement Form for mentors and mentees to establish objectives and track outcomes and will be including questions about members' interest in mentoring or being mentored in an upcoming NMRI member survey.

Are you involved in a mentoring relationship? If you are, the NMRI newsletter would like to hear from you about how the relationship began and how it has worked out for both parties. Please tell us about it

by sending an e-mail to Winnie Martinez at martinezw@mail.nih.gov.

"I owe a lot to my mentors for showing me what is possible and encouraging me to aim high in my medical career.

Speaker at the 2008 NMRI Annual Meeting

NMRI Midwest Regional Workshop Scheduled for November 13 - 14, 2008

NMRI's Midwest Regional Workshop will be held on November 13 - 14, 2008, at the Hyatt Regency Chicago, in Chicago, IL. The workshop is designed for medical students currently conducting research and other underrepresented minority investigators (such as post-docs, junior faculty, and residents/medical students) who are engaged in NIDDK-relevant research. Researchers from all states in the Midwest Region—Illinois,

Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin—are invited to attend.

Highlights of this meeting will include topics such as:

- ◆ Managing laboratory growth and remaining focused
- ◆ Mentors: finding or being a great one
- ◆ Funding mechanisms
- ◆ Planning for promotion and tenure
- ◆ Networking to your advantage
- ◆ How to get your manuscript published
- ◆ Moving from an idea to a winning proposal
- ◆ Unlocking the mystery of the review of your grant application



Dr. Eddie Greene will Chair the NMRI Regional Meeting

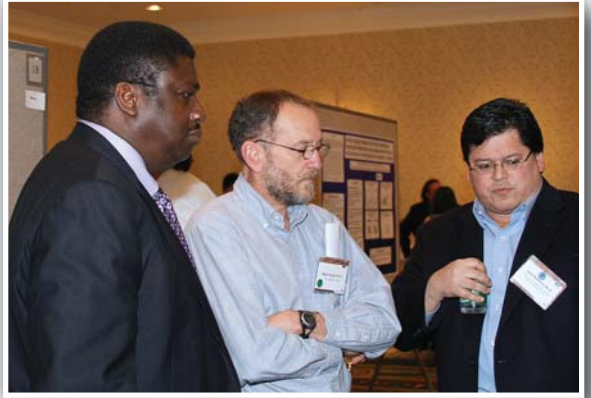
News From the NMRI Oversight Committee

The mission of the Oversight Committee is to:

- ◆ Promote mentoring relationships;
- ◆ Identify new members and conduct outreach to societies;
- ◆ Establish groupings of NMRI members by interest and location;
- ◆ Organize informal gatherings at meetings or conferences of other organizations;
- ◆ Evaluate the effectiveness of the NMRI;
- ◆ Confirm that NMRI members are working in areas of interest to NIDDK.

Given this mission, the Committee has determined that there is a need for a membership database with information to support the network, including areas of interest for members and society affiliations. This will allow the establishment of mentor-mentee pairs to work on specific objectives, with the ability to track outcomes, as well as enable the NMRI to obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the network. To gather information for this database, the Committee circulated a survey to NMRI members.

Please take the survey at <http://www.scgcorp.com/nmrisurvey08>.



Eddie Green and Mario Ascoli discuss with Jose Romero his poster, "Activation of the Mineralocorticoid Receptor Regulates Striatin Levels In Vivo."

Future activities of the Oversight Committee include the following:

- ◆ Identify other meetings attended by several NMRI members and encourage informal gatherings and outreach;
- ◆ Establish groups of NMRI members with similar interests and encourage collaborations; and
- ◆ Obtain feedback from mentors and mentees regarding the effectiveness of the program and the Mentor Agreement Form as a tool.

The Oversight Committee is making an effort to match mentors and mentees with similar research interests. A form was distributed before the 2008 NMRI Annual Meeting to assist in matching. A similar effort will be made before the 2009 NMRI Annual Meeting. We will be alerting you to this sometime after the first of the year.

Want to Take Your Grant Out for a Test Drive?

Would you like to have your grant application critiqued by experts before you submit it to NIDDK or after you have received feedback on it?

Participants in the NMRI Annual Meeting had the opportunity to do just that. The meeting included mock study sections that reviewed sample grant applications, including applications submitted by NMRI members. The opportunity to participate in these sessions was especially valuable for NMRI members who had submitted unsuccessful grant applications or who would soon be submitting a grant application for the first time.

In the mock study sections, the session leaders, all of whom had participated in past grant reviews, provided critical feed-

back of the applications, and a Scientific Review Officer (SRO) led a discussion of the feedback session. One of the most useful activities during the session was the grading of the applications by “study section” participants, with direct feedback on why they would have scored the application as they did.

The mock study sections at the Annual Meeting were led by **Carlos Isales, M.D.**, of the Medical College of Georgia; **Daisy De Leon, Ph.D.**, of Loma Linda University; **Renty Franklin, Ph.D.**, of the University of Maryland; and **Ricardo Azziz, M.D.**, of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. The SROs were **Michael Edwards, M.D.**, of the Medical College of Georgia, and **Michele Barnard, Ph.D.**, **Maria Davila-Bloom, Ph.D.**, and **James Hyde, Ph.D.**, of NIDDK.

NIDDK Research Grants

NIDDK supports research under a variety of grant mechanisms. The major funding mechanisms include R01 research project grants (the most widely used mechanism), P01 program project grants for the support of broadly based multidisciplinary or multifaceted research programs, and various types of mentored training grants for new investigators.

In addition, NIDDK has some new or less well-known funding opportunities that researchers can take advantage of, as **Judith Podskalny, Ph.D.**, of NIDDK explained at the NMRI Annual Meeting. For example, U34 grants are issued for planning large-scale clinical trials for which plans are

already fairly well developed, and include funds for the planning stage so that the subsequent U01 grant, if approved, can avoid a long pre-recruitment phase.

Another opportunity new to NIDDK is individual F30 predoctoral fellowships for students who are enrolled in a combined M.D./Ph.D. program and who are not supported by National Institute of General Medical Sciences training programs. These grants provide up to 6 years of funding for stipends, tuition, and fees.

R34 clinical trial planning grants are being awarded by NIDDK for translational research for the prevention and control of diabetes and

obesity. This grant is appropriate for researchers who are interested in community outreach, promoting healthy lifestyles, childhood obesity treatment, diabetes education and self-management, and health care management in underserved populations.

Some R01 grant applicants who narrowly failed to qualify for funding may be awarded R56 grants to provide an opportunity to complete additional work that would make their R01 grant eligible for funding. R56 grants cannot be applied for directly.

Only two types of R03 small research grant applications are accepted by NIDDK: from researchers who have certain types of K grants and for endoscopic clinical research in pancreatic and biliary diseases.

Many grant mechanisms are available for the training of young investigators. These

include F31, F32, T35, and T32. In addition, K01, K08, K18, K23, and K25 grants are available for specific individuals and projects. Check NIDDK's website (listed below) to determine if you qualify. In addition, K24 grants are designed for experienced researchers who are actively engaged in patient-oriented research and who serve as mentors for new clinical investigators. Another special type of K grant is the K99, which is the only grant in the K series for which non-U.S. citizens can apply.

These are only some of the many funding opportunities offered by NIDDK. For further information on these and other types of grants supported by NIDDK, visit NIDDK's website at http://www.niddk.nih.gov/fund/grants_process/revmech.htm.

NMRI Members on the Move

Jn the year since the 2007 NMRI Annual Meeting, many of our members have received career promotions and secured funding for research or programs. This is the list of those we know about. Let us know if you have changes to add to this list.

Dale Abel was promoted from Assistant Professor to full Professor, and appointed Chief of the Division of Endocrinology, Metabolism, and Diabetes, at the University of Utah School of Medicine. He also received a U01 grant from NIH's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; an American Diabetes Research Award; and an American Diabetes Association Mentor-Based Postdoctoral Fellowship Award.

Ricardo Azziz, Chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, was appointed Acting Director of the General Clinical Research Center at Cedars-Sinai; was appointed Assistant Dean of Clinical and Translational Sciences at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine; was selected as a member of the Data Safety Monitoring Board, Reproductive Medicine Network, for NIH's Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD); and received 3-year R01 funding from NICHD for a study on "Adrenal Androgen Excess in Polycystic Ovary Syndrome: Role of Genetics."

Alphonso Brown, Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Harvard Medical School, received a 2-year Junior Faculty Career Development Award from the American College of Gastroenterology.

Christopher G. Brown, Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine, Division of Nephrology, Ohio State University Medical Center, became an Assistant Program Director of Internal Medicine and Medical Director of the Fresenius Medical Center.

Terry Brown-Bryan moved from her position as Postdoctoral Fellow at Loma Linda University to Clinical Instructor and Research Faculty at Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science in Los Angeles.

Samuel Dagogo-Jack, Professor of Medicine at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, received reauthorization of his R01, received a Mentor-based Fellowship Award from the American Diabetes Association to fund one fellow in his laboratory for 4 years, and received the 2008 Distinction in Clinical Endocrinology Award from the American College of Endocrinology.

Robert Ferry, Jr., has moved from the University of Texas Health Science Center Department of Pediatrics in San Antonio, Texas, to Le Bonheur Children's Medical Center, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, University of Tennessee Health Science Center, Memphis, Tennessee, where he was appointed Chief, Section of Pediatric Endocrinology, and Chair of Excellence in Pediatric Endocrinology.

Sherita Hill Golden, Director of the Inpatient Diabetes Management Service at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, was promoted to Associate Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology.

Ikhide Imumorin, Assistant Professor of Biology at Spelman College, received funding from the NIH-NCMHD RIMI program to study the role of Y chromosome genes on essential hypertension.

Mary Frances Lopez received a promotion from Instructor to Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the Children's Hospital/Harvard Medical School, Endocrine Division.

Rocio Pereira received NIH funding from the National Center for Research Resources for a K23 Career Development Award.

Jesus Rivera-Nieves was promoted to Associate Professor at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center; he also received reauthorization of his R03 and K08 funding.

Sylvia Rosas, Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, received R21 funding for 2 years to conduct a prospective cohort study on "Coronary Calcifications in Hemodialysis Patients."

Charmaine Stewart was promoted to Associate Professor and the Fellowship Director of the Transplant Hepatology Program at the University of Minnesota.

Karol Watson was promoted to Associate Professor of Medicine/Cardiology at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine.

For NMRI Members Only

Please complete the
NMRI member survey at [http://
www.scgcorp.com/nmrisurvey08/](http://www.scgcorp.com/nmrisurvey08/)



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