Cancer Communications Research Expanding through CIS

In step with the National Cancer Institute's intensified effort to learn how to communicate better about cancer, its Cancer Information Service is expanding its research activities. CIS is conducting cancer communications studies in collaboration with academic researchers, technology experts and regional organizations that serve minority and underserved groups.

CIS regional offices are participating in 16 communications research protocols. These include interventions testing breast and ovarian cancer genetic counseling protocols, clinical trials education for healthcare providers, and interactive web-based cancer risk assessments.

Real-World Context

Through its network of 14 regional offices serving the United States, Puerto Rico, and

NIH Hosts Pavilion at Black Family Reunion

As part of its outreach efforts to address health disparities, NIH will participate in the 16th annual National Black Family Reunion Celebration Sept. 8-9 on the grounds of the Washington Monument. NIH has reserved a pavilion to educate the public about its commitment to conduct and support research that will result in improved health for all people. The National Council of Negro Women reunion attracts more than 500,000 people. All are welcome to attend. Admission is free. The reunion web site address is http://www.eurweb.com/reunion/. For more information, contact Joan Lee of NEI (496-8990), Levon Parker of NINDS (496-6332) or Michael Chew of OD (402-3681).

Brain Exhibit Invites Touch, Squeeze

By Constance Burr

Do you know your way around your brain? Kids and adults can take a virtual walk through cerebral megamodels in “Brain: The World Inside Your Head,” an exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution’s Arts and Industries Bldg. You are invited to touch, squeeze, pull, stand on, even walk all over the exhibit, which interprets the latest research on the body’s center of thought, emotion, memory and action.

When you cruise the snazzy interactive stations, don’t miss Getting Inside Your Head: Two visitors take a hands-on look at the physical aspects of the body’s central command through the “Unhinge-A-Brain” interactive display.

NIH and Art Careers Blossom Late for Leighty

By Rich McManus

There are probably a lot of people laboring away at unanticipated NIH careers; people who never expected to have to earn a paycheck, but who were forced by circumstance to forge livelihoods. There probably aren’t that many, however, whose careers and avocations have blossomed at a comparatively late stage; NIAID’s Karen Leighty knows she is among the lucky few. When life handed her rocks, she began chiseling. “I couldn’t imagine why a woman would choose to take on a career. I wanted to live simply. I always planned on being a...
Healthy Overweight Women Needed

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development is seeking healthy African American and Caucasian overweight women, ages 18-40, to participate in a research study on the effects of carbohydrates and fats on body composition and reproduction. You may be eligible if you are a non-smoker, have a regular menstrual cycle, are not taking any prescribed drugs and have no major illness. Participation involves one outpatient and two separate inpatient visits. Compensation is provided. Call 496-7731.

At the annual NIGMS awards ceremony recently, director Dr. Marvin Cassman (c) recognized four employees with the NIH Award of Merit. Gail Grosman (l), chief of the Administrative Services Branch, and Crystal James (r), deputy chief of the branch, were cited for skillfully coordinating the complex renovations and reconfiguration of NIGMS offices. Susan Athey (second from l), a public affairs specialist in the Office of Communications and Public Liaison, was cited for communication efforts in support of the NIGMS mission, with particular emphasis on the institute's minority programs. Kathy Springmann (second from r), a grants management specialist in the Division of Extramural Activities, was cited for outstanding representation of NIGMS and NIH by presenting National Research Service Award workshops to the Society of Research Administrators and the National Council of University Research Administrators.

CANCER COMMUNICATIONS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the U.S. Virgin Islands, CIS interacts with cancer patients, their families and the public. It uses three principal communication channels: a telephone service (1-800-4-CANCER), the Internet, and a partnership program. Last year, 405,712 people called CIS and another 496,495 visited the CIS website. The CIS partnership program, which builds relationships with organizations across the country in order to reach underserved and special populations, responded to 12,861 requests for service.

Access to these underserved and special populations has attracted some researchers to work with CIS. “The CIS offers an especially good opportunity to do translational research, taking communication strategies, persuasion strategies, and social influence strategies with strong theoretical bases, and seeing how robust they are in a real-world context,” said Dr. Peter Salovey, professor and chairman of psychology and professor of epidemiology and public health, Yale University.

Salovey is principal investigator on two research projects with CIS. The first, funded by a private foundation, is testing the effectiveness of tailoring messages about mammography to each caller’s psychological style of processing health-related information. The second study is placing computers plus technical assistance in Head Start centers in New Haven, to provide access to cancer information to urban families via the Internet. The latter project is one of four NCI-supported grants to address the Digital Divide.

Bridging the Digital Divide

In September 2000, NCI announced its effort to bridge the Digital Divide that prevents underserved communities from accessing cancer information on the Internet. NCI has awarded grants of nearly $1 million to fund projects that employ the CIS, academic researchers, and community groups in five regions around the country to test strategies that expand computer access among minority and low-income populations.

One Digital Divide study is testing the CHESS Program (Comprehensive Health Enhancement Support System), which places computers in the homes of breast cancer patients and provides an intranet system of health resources to educate and help them face their disease. Two CIS regional offices are working with principal investigator Dr. David H. Gustafson to study whether access to CHESS improves the women’s health and well-being. The Partnership Program of the Midwest CIS is helping to recruit African-American women in Detroit to the program, and the North Central CIS is bringing the CHESS program to breast cancer patients in rural Wisconsin.

“All of us have a lot to learn about reaching the underserved,” said Gustafson, professor of industrial engineering and professor of preventive medicine at the Center for Health Systems Research and Analysis at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. “The CIS is open to doing research that will improve their reach into underserved communities.”—Alexandra Lindemann
New NICHID Clinical Director Brings Personal Touch
By Melissa Braddock

A photograph of a young boy playing with toys sits on Dr. Stephen Kaler's bookshelf. The child appears no different than any other his age. What sets him apart is that he is among the first patients Kaler successfully treated for Menkes disease, a rare neurological disorder that kills male infants before their third birthday.

"As a parent as well as a physician, I feel a deep connection with these boys and their families," Kaler said. "There is no health quite as vibrant as a child's, and so no illness is quite as dramatic. Often the parents of these patients have the pain of watching the transition from apparent good health to essentially irreversible sickness. I'm very gratified that our work has helped improve this situation."

As NICHID's new clinical director, Kaler will oversee nearly 100 research protocols that comprise the institute's intramural clinical research program. He seeks to enhance a program that is already strong; the institute's current clinical program includes research on genetic disorders, endocrine disease, growth, development and reproduction, as well as national and international public health concerns in maternal and child health.

"There's a mature program of clinical trials already established here and the scope of studies is broad. My work will be to refine and re-craft the direction of the program in small ways in order to maintain excellence where it exists and foster it in other areas," Kaler said.

He obtained his undergraduate degree from Boston College and his M.D from the University of Rochester. After training in internal medicine and pediatrics, he came to NIH in 1988 as a clinical associate in medical genetics in the section on human biochemical genetics at NICHID.

It was here that he began his work with Menkes disease, a neurodegenerative disorder of copper transport that affects about 1 in 100,000 male infants. Although children with Menkes disease seem normal at birth, parents start noticing convulsions and other neurological problems by 3 months. Most patients die before age 3.

In work published in the journal Nature Genetics, Kaler identified genetic mutations responsible for this disorder. These defects were shown to disrupt proper messenger RNA splicing, a finding that provided insight about normal RNA processing in mammalian cells.

In 1995, Kaler moved on to the position of director of biochemical and molecular genetics at Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C., a post he held for 5 years.

"Looking back, that was a very formative stint for me," he said. "I had opportunities to work and direct others in a very busy clinical setting and in a high-volume diagnostics lab, as well as at the research bench. In that environment, surrounded by others who are doing it all effectively, one learns the skills needed for survival and success in the world of academic medicine."

While working at Children's, Kaler also attended George Washington University on nights and weekends to earn a master's degree in public health, emphasizing epidemiology, biostatistics, and international public health. Last year, he returned to NIH as deputy associate director for disease prevention in the Office of the NIH Director, maintaining his research activities as an adjunct investigator in NINDS. He has found the public health training and perspective useful in considering his own clinical trials and expects it to be an asset in his new position.

"As we move forward in the genomics era, public health and disease prevention will increasingly become allied with genetics," Kaler predicts. "The future clinical investigations we perform here should reflect this trend."

Along with his new responsibilities, Kaler will continue to serve as an attending physician in NHGRI and to pursue his own research as head of the unit on pediatric genetics in NICHID. At least in part, this will involve further research on Menkes disease. He and his colleagues are trying to find out why early treatment with copper supplements doesn't work for all Menkes patients. He suspects that those who do not respond have problems transporting the copper through the blood-brain barrier, and he is now devising ways to administer treatment directly to the brain.

In his first weeks in his new position, Kaler has learned very significantly from my association with these other physician scientists and from the NICHID leadership that has assembled this remarkable program."
SCULPTOR LEIGHTY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

kept woman," she says with a laugh, and for her early married years, she lived a rustic idyll: a house so far into the exurban Pennsylvania woods that a car couldn't reach the front door, a husband who was a community planner and was prominent in civil rights in the days before it garnered liberal cachet, two daughters, an Irish wolfhound, and something more—a talent of hand and eye that permitted her to speak deeply through sculpture.

"We weren't hippies, though the romantic side of me wishes we were," she continues, recalling her pre-employment era when her family was too settled and responsible for true hippiedom. "We had this idyllic, sixties sort of lifestyle, which we absolutely loved. We ground our own flour from 75-pound sacks of wheat for bread. We picked our own peaches and made jam." Her husband—"a rising star in the early civil rights movement"—sometimes hosted civil rights activists for dinner before he became director of planning for the Pennsylvania department of public welfare. Karen encouraged her daughters' interests in the arts, helped run the local Girl Scout troop, volunteered as a reading aid in her kids' school, and applied her art to activities of everyday living.

Then, not long after the family relocated to suburban Washington, her husband's health failed and Karen found herself looking for a job. "I hadn't planned to work, but I realized I had become the head of the family." She first came to NIH in 1979 as a secretary at NIDDK. Four years later, her husband died of a heart attack. "The women in my family supported their husband's careers. I hadn't planned to be the sole support of my family. That was the bumpy stage of my life."

She rose through a progression of editing jobs that took advantage of her "solid background in English," though she had majored in art at the Philadelphia Museum School of Art. After maxing out at the editorial assistant level, Leighty managed, through fortuitous guidance from NIAID mentors, to rise to public affairs specialist within the institute, and then last fall to peak at a position—visual communications specialist—that really had its origins on the walls of an outhouse nestled in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

"I think it all began with the blue fairies," she explains with a wink. Though born in Jefferson, Wisc., Leighty moved at age 4 to Boulder, Colo.

"Esperanza" from 1995 is a cubist female. "She has a very hopeful, chin-up look, and is playful," Leighty says. "Like something wonderful is going to happen. She reflects a very sincere feeling about optimism."

Leighty labors on "Lascaux" (pictured on next page) at Montgomery College art studio in 1996.

"I spent summers and vacations up in the mountains in a town called Gold Hill. There was an outhouse at our cabin there, and I drew blue fairies on the walls of the outhouse with a crayon, as kids will do. There were not that many other kids up there, so I entertained myself. I took long walks with a stray dog and a homeless burro—they were my friends. I am quite convinced they are the tie-ins with my interest in animal sculpture."

Long rid of the notion that she hails from anywhere other than Colorado, Leighty said she was deeply influenced by "the color of the natural material in the rocks, the glint of iron pyrite in gold ore. I was fascinated with those colors and shapes. I love bronze patinas because they reflect those colors."

At age 10, she relocated with her family to Philadelphia; her dad became comptroller of the company that invented the Univac computer. "I took as many art courses as I could in high school," she recalls, "and I won a scholarship to take Saturday classes at Moore School of Design in Philadelphia." Art so consumed her that she considered no other way of life. "I didn't think about a career or making money or supporting myself. It just never entered my mind." She painted in oils and watercolors, drew with pen and pencil, welded metal, threw pottery. "I experimented with everything. But the things that felt the most powerful to me were the sculptures. Even working with papier-mâché, I found I could create things with a lot more impact than painting or drawing. They expressed me better. For an artist, it's all about..."
communication—you hope that you have spoken well.”

Asked what use art was when she found herself widowed, Leighty says the tragedy blocked her completely. “I couldn’t do art, so I turned to physical projects. There was a depression in the yard at our house. I set about to fill it in and put plantings there. Art was not a part of my reality.”

It dwains on her in the retelling that she was literally filling in her “depression. I guess I was sculpting the earth.”

Leighty, who goes by Leigh in the art world (“People just don’t remember the name Leighty”), says certain key people in both her art and NIH lives have played crucial roles in her success.

“My life has been full of inspiring characters,” she says. One legendary instructor in Philadelphia gave her class a simple assignment—make an egg. Reviewing the anonymous creations, he settled on hers. “I like the sound of this one,” he said, turning it rhythmically and holding it to his ear. The class laughed, but Leighty says “it felt lovely that something so simple reached somebody.”

Later on in life, her husband gone and her kids grown up, Leighty found herself home alone, with evenings free, so she enrolled in art classes at Montgomery College.

“Sarah Silberman, an elderly artist who used the college studio, was a great inspiration to me. She was 84, with hands gnarled by arthritis, but she produced exquisite work. She made me a tool with my name on it: she took a bamboo stick, broke it, cut it with a band saw to the right size, and sanded it so that I could use it for shaping clay. I was so impressed by how totally comfortable she was with these big power tools. She was like a fairy godmother, encouraging me. She was the first in a series of fairy godmothers and godfathers who took me by the shoulders and got me working and showing my work.”

Leighty would spend three hours a night in art class after working a full day at NIH. “It was a really stimulating, challenging time for me and I loved it. I started really producing. I did my first bronze castings.”

She describes the origins and inspirations for early pieces with an enthusiasm that underscores an admission she had made earlier: “Inside, I really feel like I’m still 15.”

She has shocked herself by becoming what she never foresaw as an art student—a teacher. Each Wednesday night, she teaches animal sculpture at the Art League in Alexandria, Va.

“I had so many good mentors,” she recalls. “A good one becomes a thorn in your side. Sort of like a football coach, you know, ‘Up and at ‘em—go out there and kill!’ They kept my momentum up. It’s incredibly gratifying how many people have gone out of their way to show me that it’s all possible. I’m just incredibly grateful.”

A recent project has brought her art and medical lives, her Leigh and her Leighty, together. Under a commission as a gift to the National Library of Medicine, she has created bronze portrait busts of medical luminaries Moses Maimonides, Louis Pasteur and Edward Jenner for an exhibit that debuts this fall. She has also had a solo show at the Clinical Center gallery, and has work on view there now.

“I never thought I’d be launching a career at 60 years of age, or see my career at NIH blossoming at a time when I could be retiring,” she said. “For the first time in my life, I’m earning my living as an artist. But I’m very much looking forward to eventually retiring and doing (sculpture) full time—it will be great fun.”

Anticipating a new market for her work in the American southwest, where she visits regularly, Leighty is currently at work on a flying horse for a show. “I’ve decided I’m an expert in flying horses,” she declares. “No one who has seen her work, or heard her talk about the life she has shaped from bumpy circumstance, would dispute it.”

Hispanic Heritage Month Observation

The 2001 NIH Hispanic Heritage Month celebration is titled “Healthy Families—A Healthy Nation,” and will be held Wednesday, Sept. 19 from 9 to 11:30 a.m. in Lipsett Amphitheater, Bldg. 10. Welcoming remarks will be given by Dr. Ruth Kirschstein, acting NIH director, followed by a panel discussion on health disparities in Latino/Hispanic populations. Panelists include moderator Ray Suarez of the PBS NewsHour; Dr. Jane Delgado, National Alliance for Hispanic Health; Kirschstein; Dr. Joe L. Martinez, University of Texas, San Antonio; Dr. Fernando Mendoza, Hispanic-Serving Health Professions Schools; and Dr. John Ruffin, director, National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities. A reception will follow in the Visitor Information Center, Bldg. 10. All are welcome.
EEG Children and grownups can lean on electrodes to see a simulation of real-time EEG measurements of corresponding brain activity.

Synapse Pop, which highlights connections between communicating neurons. Release a red ball that rumbles through a purple axon tunnel. At the end is a gap between neurons, a synapse. The ball disappears and sets off a clatter, imitating the action of a chemical signal traveling between neurons.

Walk into Lightning Storm, a model that reveals how electrochemical activity works. Take the spaceship controls to view neurons from different species, and play a video game to find out how sleep recharges the human battery.

In Back and Forth, you'll see how your brain controls your ability to balance. A timer tells you how long you can balance on a specially designed board, while a figure lights up as the brain coordinates this complex action.

“Part of our job was to explain links between the brain's organization and function—from cellular activity to perception to cognition,” said Dr. Dennis Glanzman, chief, Theoretical and Computational Neuroscience Program at NIMH. “The challenge was to show that the brain is always active and changing.” Glanzman and Dr. Douglas Meincke, chief, Developmental Neuroscience Program, NIMH, have been project consultants.

A gaggle of 7- to 9-year-olds at the Smithsonian Associates' Brain Craze Camp made the models work. One budding brain surgeon and deft video gamer targeted tumors and zapped them with radiation.

“My brain isn't done yet,” another camper noted as he tracked animated neurons firing.

Stations explore both healthy and malfunctioning brains. Brain disorders such as depression, Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, and schizophrenia are described, as are headaches, dyslexia, strokes and tumors. The Agony of Addiction portrays alcohol and drug abuse, which cause permanent changes in brain chemistry. Families are encouraged to discuss these conditions as disorders with physical causes, while new research, treatments and technologies emphasize that many of them are treatable.

Depending on your interests, you can focus on physiology, imaging and learning techniques, language, consciousness, and sleep, or the mind as what the brain does. "Brain Bytes" point out amazing facts throughout: The brain contains as many neurons, over 100 billion, as there are stars in the Milky Way Galaxy. It feels no pain, though it registers pain through the entire body. Your brain is constantly creating and interpreting who you are.

Scientists will give a self-paced exhibit tour on Friday, Sept. 28 at 6:30 p.m. The following experts will answer questions and explain the brain more thoroughly: Dr. Alan Leshner, director of NIDA; Dr. Gerald Fischbach, dean, Medical College at Columbia University, and Drs. Richard Nakamura, deputy director, and Stephen Foote, division director, both of NIMH. Dr. Steven Hyman, NIMH director, will offer opening remarks. Contact the Smithsonian Associates for more information at (202) 357-3030 or visit www.ResidentAssociates.org.

“Brain” will remain at the Smithsonian until Jan. 2, 2002, when it will travel to 15 more sites. It was made possible by a grant from Pfizer and produced by BBH Inc., in collaboration with NIH, including NIMH, NIDA and NINDS.
John Medina Is Mourned
By Joan Brogan

John Medina III, 59, died on June 17 at Casey House Hospice in Rockville, Md. He had lung cancer with metastasis to the brain, diagnosed only 4 weeks before his death. Medina, who with his wife Janet lived just south of Frederick in Ijamsville, Md., had moved here from Kearney, N.J. in 1995.

Born in New York City, Medina earned a bachelor of arts degree in political science from Columbia University in 1976, and a master's degree in public administration from New York University in 1985. He was enrolled in a doctoral program from 1985 to 1987 at NYU's Wagner School of Public Affairs.

Medina's longtime commitment to civil rights and equal opportunity issues had become evident early in his life. His wife spoke about "the courage he displayed to fight racism during the late 50's and 60's, when it was not popular to do so." She recalled a story from when he served in the U.S. Air Force from 1958 to 1961. "John and his buddies were driving from New York to a military base in the south when they stopped at a local diner late at night, having not eaten all day," she related. "The diner went silent as they entered and the owner came over to their table to tell them that only white people would be served and allowed in the diner. John's friend would have to wait outside. John refused to accept such conditions, stood up and in a loud voice said to his buddies, 'Let's go!' and they followed him out the door. They got in the car and drove all night back to the base."

Over the years, Medina was involved in the development of legislation pertaining to civil rights, especially with Sen. Jacob Javits (R-N.Y.) and his staff. His interest in this area led him to his first post in the federal government at the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, where he headed the National Puerto Rican Project in the mid-Atlantic states. He wrote a report, "In Search of a Better Life: The Education and Housing Problems of Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia" that was published by the commission.

Afterwards, he served as an EEO Specialist and Hispanic employment program manager for the departments of the Interior, Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development in Washington and New York offices. In June 1994, he came to NIH as the Hispanic Employment Program manager in the Office of Equal Opportunity, where he remained until February 2000, when he accepted a position as grants management specialist in the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

During his nearly 6 years of service in OEO, Medina was well known for the role he played in coordinating minority outreach programs, which included the student internship program sponsored by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and the National Hispanic Youth Initiative sponsored by the Inter-American College of Physicians and Surgeons.

He also worked to bring closer collaboration with Native American organizations such as the American Indians Science and Engineering Society and other minority-serving institutions. He served as the OEO liaison to the Hispanic Employees Organization, the Native American Employees Group and the Asian/Pacific Islander American Organization.

His wife says, "John's days in the theater are probably the most fun to mention." Medina spoke frequently of his hobby of planting trees, and his close colleagues knew he was a good dancer, but Janet shared this tidbit: "Though I did not know him at the time," she said, "he was considered one of the best dancers in New York City and was sociable with Sammy Davis Jr., Ava Gardner, Frank Sinatra, Chita Rivera, other theater folks and several popular rock and roll groups."

Though NIH did not benefit from these skills, Medina's colleagues at OEO and the NIH community will remember him as having boundless energy and expertise in promoting the goals of civil rights, equal opportunity and diversity—dreams of his youth that played out in a positive way at NIH.

Postpartum Depression Study

The Behavioral Endocrinology Branch, NIMH, is seeking volunteer mothers ages 18-40 who have had one or more past episodes of postpartum depression following a full-term pregnancy, but are not currently depressed. Participants must be free of medical illnesses, medication-free and currently not breastfeeding. Volunteers may be asked to participate in a 6-month protocol investigating the effects of hormones on brain and behavior. All participants who complete the study will be paid. For information call Linda Simpson-St. Clair, 496-9576.

Adults Needed for Study

College-educated, middle-aged adults are needed for a 2-day outpatient study at NIMH. Involves blood draw and routine clinical, neurological and cognitive procedures. A stipend is available. Inquire at 433-8970.

Meeting on Protein Kinase A

A meeting on "Protein Kinase A and Human Disease" will be held on Monday, Sept. 10 in Masur Auditorium, Bldg. 10. There will be a poster session; fellows and students are encouraged to submit abstracts for consideration as this is an excellent opportunity to meet with some of the leading investigators in PKA signaling. For more information contact Dr. Constantine Stratakis at 402-1998 or Dr. Yoon Sang Cho-Chung at 496-4020.
Career, Training Expo Draws Hundreds

Hundreds of employees attended a career development and training expo on June 26. The Office of the Director’s Equal Employment Opportunity advisory committee organized the event to provide employees with information on programs offered within the NIH community. The event gave employees an opportunity to meet with representatives of these programs and receive advice and handouts.

The expo began with words of encouragement and support from Dr. Ruth Kirschstein, NIH acting director; Dr. Yvonne Maddox, NIH acting deputy director; and Charles Leasure, NIH acting executive officer. A ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the exhibit area followed. Framed event posters were presented to Steve Benowitz, director of the Office Human Resource Management, and to Dr. Jack Whitescarver, acting director of the Office of AIDS Research, for their assistance and sponsorship of the event.

Exhibit subjects at the expo included the Human Resource Development Division of OHRM, FAES, NIH Office of Education, CSR Intern Program, NIH Work and Family Life Center, Center for Information Technology training, National Library of Medicine rotation program, and representatives from NIH predoctoral fellowship awards.

At left, Dr. Tony René (seated) of NIGMS and Lorrayne Jackson (r) of NIDCR dispense material and advice about fellowship programs.

NIH acting director Dr. Ruth Kirschstein (r), NIH acting deputy director Dr. Yvonne Maddox and NIH Acting Executive Officer Charles Leasure open the career development and training expo.

Expo planning committee chair Joyce Starks (l) and cochair Tarnzetta Hampton offer remarks. Along with Charles Leasure, they organized the expo as an activity of the OD EEO advisory committee.

FAES representatives (l) share information about career development and training opportunities available on campus.