

# nih record



**ABOVE** • Future scientists? Students from NIH's adopted school visit Lister Hill Center. See story at right.

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## NIH Black History Month Event Features Morehouse's Higginbotham

By Carla Garnett

**T**he challenge put before NIH's Black History Month guest speaker was a bit like the task of closing the nation's health disparities: Engage a widely diverse audience to use their individual skills and talents to increase the world's potential. Of course keynoter Dr. Eve Higginbotham was atop a much smaller stage.

"We have to bring to this issue our own experiences, our own perspectives," she said, addressing a Lister Hill Center assembly that included not only NIH scientists, administrators, fellows and other staff, but also about 25 youngsters from J.G. Whittier Education Center. Located in northwest Washington, D.C., the public school, which serves children from pre-school age through grade 6, is NIH's adopted school.

Hosted by NIH's Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management, the pro-



Dr. Eve Higginbotham

SEE BLACK HISTORY, PAGE 6



Harvard Medical School's Dr. Jim Yong Kim

*'From Science to Service'*

### OBSSR Hosts Conference on Dissemination, Implementation

By Belle Waring

As a way to improve public health in a battered world, understanding poverty counts as much as knowing how proteins fold. That's why translational research doesn't stop at new drugs and vaccines. It includes delivering interventions to those who need them most.

"Global health is suffering from a huge imple-

SEE OBSSR, PAGE 4

*Happy Birthday, Biowulf*

### CIT Celebrates Computer Cluster

By Belle Waring

"The NIH Biowulf Cluster: 10 Years of Scientific Supercomputing," a recent CIT symposium in Lipsett Amphitheater, treated attendees to a decade's worth of research using the system.

NIH chief information officer Dr. John F. Jones, Jr., in opening remarks, celebrated Biowulf's 10-year anniversary, calling it "our largest activity supporting the scientific mission of NIH."

As of 2008, Biowulf end-users included 19 of 27 institutes and centers.

A central supercomputing resource managed by CIT, Biowulf is a biomedical cluster—one of the largest in the world. Twelve conference



Dr. Steven Fellini of CIT, Biowulf architect

SEE BIOWULF, PAGE 8



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## briefs

### FARE 2010 Invites Applicants

The 16th annual Fellows Award for Research Excellence (FARE) 2010 competition provides recognition for outstanding scientific research performed by intramural NIH postdoctoral fellows. FARE winners receive a \$1,000 travel award to present their work at a scientific meeting. Twenty-five percent of the fellows who apply will win an award. Applications, including abstracts, will be accepted through Mar. 25 at <http://felcom.od.nih.gov/subcommittee/fare.aspx>. Winners will be announced by Aug. 15 and the travel award must be used between Oct. 1, 2009, and Sept. 30, 2010. More information is available at the web site above. Contact a Felcom representative from your institute if you have more questions (<http://felcom.od.nih.gov/members.aspx>).

### Sailing Association Open House, Mar. 12

The NIH Sailing Association invites everyone to its open house on Thursday, Mar. 12 from 5 to 8 p.m. at the FAES House at the corner of Old Georgetown Rd. and Cedar Ln. Would you like to learn to sail? Can you imagine being part of a group of skilled sailing instructors, enthusiasts and boat owners? The club offers instruction, sailboats for charter, racing, cruises, parties and fun. Open house is \$5 at the door and includes pizza and sodas; cash bar for beer and wine, \$1 each. Look for NIHSA posters and flyers around campus. For more information, visit [www.recgov.org/sail](http://www.recgov.org/sail).

### Nuland To Give First Straus Lecture

On Tuesday, Mar. 10, the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine will hold the inaugural Stephen E. Straus Distinguished Lecture in the Science of Complementary and Alternative Medicine. Dr. Sherwin B. Nuland, author and clinical professor of surgery at Yale University, will speak on "Chinese Medicine, Western Science and Acupuncture." The lecture begins at 2:30 p.m. in Masur Auditorium, Bldg. 10, and is followed by a poster session and reception in the southeast patio. All are invited to attend. It will also be videocast on <http://videocast.nih.gov>.

### Correction

In the Feb. 20 issue of the *NIH Record*, we reported that the "deconstruction" of Bldg. 37 earned NIH a "Beyond Green" award. Bldg. 37 still stands, and was recently renovated. It was Bldg. 36 that fell tidily to the demolisher's art.

### Wellness Series Lecture, Mar. 17

On Tuesday, Mar. 17 from 1 to 2 p.m., the NIH Wellness Series comes to the Bldg. 31 cafeteria with a lecture titled, "Spring Forward: Mind-Body Skills for Work and Home." Presented by Dr. Barbara Moquin, senior nurse specialist at NCCAM, the lecture explains ways to incorporate mind-body relaxation and energizing skills into your work and home life. Topics will include: relaxation breathing, therapeutic music and mindfulness meditation (with dark chocolate).

Future topics in the series will address line dancing, stress reduction, meditation and more. For a full list of topics and locations, contact Chris Gaines at (301) 451-3631. Sign language interpreters will be provided. Individuals who need other reasonable accommodation to participate should contact Gaines and/or the Federal Relay (1-800-877-8339).

### Two Named to AAM Governing Board

Two NIH scientists are among six new members elected to the board of governors of the American Academy of Microbiology. They are Dr. Susan Gottesman, co-chief of NCI's Laboratory of Molecular Biology and chief of its biochemical genetics section, and Dr. Louis Miller, chief of NIAID's Malaria Vaccine Development Branch. The board sets strategic direction for the academy, ratifies election to fellowship, develops new topics for colloquia and establishes new programs and initiatives. The scientists' 3-year terms begin July 1.

### International Opportunities Expo, Apr. 2

The NIH visiting fellows committee invites all NIH fellows and graduate students to participate in the 6th International Opportunities Expo on Thursday, Apr. 2 at the Natcher Conference Center from 12:30 to 4 p.m. The expo provides an opportunity for fellows to obtain information on research, grants and job opportunities available overseas and in their respective home countries. Fellows will be able to network with science and technology representatives and establish valuable contacts for the next step in their scientific careers. Last year, the expo was a success and featured science and technology representatives from government and the private sector. A list of speakers and exhibitors will be posted on <http://felcom.od.nih.gov/subCommittee/vfc/index.aspx> and disseminated via email at a later date. The event is sponsored by Fogarty International Center and the Office of Intramural Training and Education.



Biomedical librarian Doug Joubert

## Executive Leadership Program Offers Career Boost

By Cindy Clark

If you have ever used the Johari window for self-assessment, you know that the “blind spot quadrant” helps you discover what you do not know about yourself. While the tool is useful, NIH’ers pursuing top jobs may find the USDA Graduate School’s Executive Leadership Program (ELP) a more enlightening way to gain self-knowledge.

Doug Joubert of the NIH Library and 179 other federal employees are currently enrolled in the 9-month program targeted to individuals at the GS 11-13 levels. ELP participants, most with little or no supervisory experience, are gaining skills through developmental work experiences, needs assessment and career planning. The NIH Library is sponsoring Joubert’s education, aimed at helping him move to a higher level.

Karen Stakes, head of information services at the library, is Joubert’s ELP mentor. “The mentoring process has afforded me the opportunity to improve upon my coaching, counseling and listening skills,” she said. “It has also been very rewarding to see how Doug has taken ownership of the mentoring process by willingly accepting challenges, taking risks and developing new competencies.”

Joubert said he “chose a mentor [Stakes] who had been in the federal service a long time. The benefit was to learn the social and professional aspects, which I wasn’t accustomed to because I came from academia.”

To date, Joubert has completed a leadership-effectiveness inventory as well as a shadowing assignment with the International Trade Association. “The ITA helped me meld my developmental needs in the use of financial management and strategic thinking,” he said. “The analogy I can give you is that my perspective at the library is at the 10,000-foot level; the person I was shadowing thinks at the 30,000-foot level.”

The last phase of his leadership training involves a 3-month detail at the Department of State. The experience will help Joubert fill in a key developmental area identified for his personal growth—human capital management, one of the executive core qualifications.

During his training, Joubert and members of his student team are exploring leadership development opportunities for people just entering federal service. “The primary unifying element of our diverse group of ELP participants is that we want to become better leaders,” he said. He expects that an outcome of the program will be better customer service to the public. “Any federal employee who is interested in assuming a leadership position in public service would benefit from formalized leadership training,” he suggested.

Joubert is set to graduate from the program in June. Along with his ELP training, he is also completing a master’s degree in biotechnology at the University of Maryland’s University College. “Basically, I have no life for 9 months,” he said with a smile. He is looking forward to implementing what he learns and enjoying a rich social life this summer.

To learn more about the Executive Leadership Program, including application details, visit [www.grad.usda.gov/index](http://www.grad.usda.gov/index). 📍

## Hopkins’ Sidransky Kicks Off NIDCR Series

On Wednesday, Mar. 18 at 2:30 p.m., Dr. David Sidransky will speak on the molecular detection and staging of cancer in Lipsett Amphitheater, Bldg. 10. His talk is the first of the 2009 NIDCR Seminar Series “From Basic Research to Therapy—The Latest Frontier.”

Sidransky’s work is focused on the molecular basis of cancer, including head and neck cancer, with particular emphasis on the molecular alterations of premalignant lesions and the development of diagnostic tests for early cancer detection.

He is a professor of otolaryngology, oncology, pathology, urology and cellular and molecular medicine at Johns Hopkins University. He is also director of head and neck cancer research at the JHU Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center as well as a principal investigator at JHU’s Head and Neck Cancer SPORE, or Specialized Program of Research Excellence.

If you wish to meet with Sidransky during his visit, contact Dr. Nadya Lumelsky at (301) 594-7703 or [nadyal@nidcr.nih.gov](mailto:nadyal@nidcr.nih.gov).

Sign language interpretation will be provided. For more information, or for reasonable accommodation, contact Mary Daum, (301) 594-7559, and/or the Federal Relay (1-800-877-8339).



**Right:**  
Harvard's Kim urged investments in implementation research.

## OBSSR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

### Terms of Translation

**Dissemination** is the spread of knowledge and intervention materials to a specific public health or clinical practice audience. Research on dissemination addresses how information on health promotion and care interventions is created, packaged, transmitted and interpreted.

**Implementation** is the use of strategies to adopt and integrate interventions and to change practice patterns within specific settings. Research on implementation explores how such interventions fit within real-world public health and clinical service systems.

mentation bottleneck...and we're not doing so well in implementation in the United States," said Harvard Medical School's Dr. Jim Yong Kim, plenary speaker at OBSSR's 2nd annual conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation: Building Research Capacity to Bridge the Gap from Science to Service.

A distinguished physician and medical anthropologist, Kim spoke to a crowd that had braved an ice storm to assemble in Natcher Bldg.

"How do we think about delivery?" he asked. Of course we want more people in the lab, he said; yet he noted that even the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (the largest such funder in the world) does not use any money for research into health systems.

"I think we have to say that not investing in qualitative research—systems research, delivery research, implementation research—is crazy," Kim said. "Given that during President Obama's 8 years, ahem"—here the audience chuckled—"health care costs in the United States will more than double.

"Why would you not invest \$30 billion," he continued, "if you can then attract the best and brightest to this fantastic new field...so that we can figure out what's working and what's not?"

I think this is the perfect role of NIH...starting something called the National Institute for Health Care Delivery."

Two days of panels, presentations and posters welcomed these questions and more.

On his way to a session, participant Dr. Onesky Aupont of the University of Massachusetts said: "We are all on the same team. I could spend 5 hours operating on someone's knee; but I could also design a policy that would help millions. I just wanted to affect more people than one at a time." 📍

### Next Wednesday Afternoon Lectures Set

The Wednesday Afternoon Lecture Series—held on its namesake day at 3 p.m. in Masur Auditorium, Bldg. 10—features Dr. Jeffrey Peters, professor, Penn State department of veterinary and biomedical sciences, on Mar. 11, speaking on "Peroxisome Proliferator-Activated Receptors (PPARs) as Molecular Targets for the Treatment and Prevention of Diseases."

On Mar. 18, Dr. Christine Jacobs-Wagner will address, "Exploring the bacterial internal organization: Cell polarization and cytoskeleton-dependent cell morphogenesis." She is the Maxine F. Singer associate professor at Yale University and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator.

For more information or for reasonable accommodation, call Sarah Freeman, (301) 594-6747.

## 'AlertNIH' Offers Quick Way To Get Emergency Info

NIH is instituting a new initiative, AlertNIH, to allow employees and contractors to receive emergency information on personal (if desired) as well as NIH-issued communications devices on a 24/7 basis. AlertNIH allows you to receive information anywhere, anytime and on almost any device including cell phones, work phones, home phones, work or personal email accounts and pagers. While the service has been in use for more than a year by NIH emergency response and recovery personnel, it is now being rolled out to provide all NIH'ers access to the notification system.

AlertNIH allows NIH, and the institutes and centers, to broadcast messages to all employees simultaneously, or to selected individuals or groups, in a faster, more efficient manner than traditional notification schemes. Messages can be tailored to groups or individuals based on their function and the circumstances requiring their expertise.

There are many benefits to using AlertNIH. Messages arrive within seconds of transmission and, since it is web-based, AlertNIH is unaffected by potential infrastructure failures on campus. Employees will be notified of emergency situations occurring on the Bethesda campus, leased buildings and other NIH facilities. Receiving information on personal communications devices may be especially helpful if an incident occurs during non-duty hours and employees may need to be notified to report the following day to an alternate worksite or delay arrival until an incident is resolved. A recent example was the water-main rupture in Montgomery County that sent non-emergency employees home early last Dec. 23. Had the decision been made after normal working hours to close NIH locations, employees may not have received word through traditional notification methods.

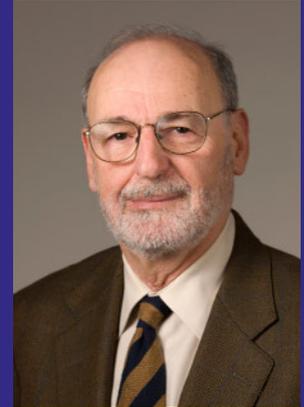
AlertNIH will automatically be provided on government-supplied communications devices (work phones, NIH email and government-issued cell phones and Blackberries) with no action required by the employee. However, Privacy Act requirements generally prohibit NIH from collecting personal contact information. In order for employees and contractors to receive AlertNIH information on personal devices (home phones, cell phones, home email), they will need to update their profile on the NIH Enterprise Directory (NED).

AlertNIH allows notifications to be received on up to five voice devices and five text devices, including NIH-supplied equipment. To access your NED profile, visit <https://ned.nih.gov/ned/> and follow instructions provided for updating profile information.

If you have questions about this service, call (301) 496-1985.

## NEI's Piatigorsky Retires to Scientist Emeritus

Dr. Joram Piatigorsky, chief of NEI's Laboratory of Molecular and Developmental Biology (LMDB) and head of its molecular genetics section, recently retired and is now scientist emeritus. He has been chief of LMDB since 1981. During his more than four-decade career at NIH, he published more than 275 papers in peer-reviewed journals, received numerous awards for his scientific achievements and delivered many national and international invited lectures.



Piatigorsky received a Ph.D. in developmental biology and chemistry in 1962 from California Institute of Technology. He was introduced to vision research during his postdoctoral studies of the lens and its crystallin proteins at NIH under Dr. Alfred J. Coulombre. At NIH, he has taught developmental biology and served as chairman of the department of biology and genetics, Foundation for Advanced Education in the Sciences (1974-1987). He has also been a teacher, mentor and thesis advisor for a dozen graduate students and more than 60 postdoctoral fellows.

He says that one of his greatest achievements has been running a lab in which people have been inspired to learn and pursue research. "They keep coming back," he says of his former fellows. "We have formed a community that has a similar pattern of thought and independence."

Piatigorsky describes his research as being "curiosity-driven," and says it is nearly impossible to follow a linear path in the laboratory. He was led from his early studies of crystallin proteins in the eye to comparative studies of crystallins in vertebrates and invertebrates ranging from chickens to jellyfish, to studies of the molecular basis for crystallin gene expression.

In 1988, he and his colleagues coined the term "gene sharing" to describe the multiple protein functions that can be expressed by one gene. His team also generated the "refraction hypothesis," extending gene sharing to the cornea and conceptually linking the lens and the cornea by way of the multiple functions of corneal crystallins.

Piatigorsky has received many awards during his career, including the 2008 Helen Keller Prize for his outstanding scientific contributions that have opened the door to a new era of molecular and genetic vision research.

What's next? "I see myself as half-scientist, half-artist," he says. "I just don't think like a normal scientist. I'm much more of a qualitative person than a quantitative person."

His lifelong love of literature took a step forward 15 years ago when he began writing short stories. At first, he was so busy as a scientist that he decided to write only what he could finish in a single sitting so he wouldn't get overwhelmed.

In the following years, however, he has kept writing and has even completed a novella. "I really love literature and writing because it's totally creative, but it's a different form of creation than science," he says. "With science, you try to be creative within the rules of nature, but in literature, you're allowed to create the rules."



## BLACK HISTORY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

### **Above:**

*Youngsters from J.G. Whittier Education Center, NIH's adopted school, were among attendees at the annual Black History Month observance.*

### **Below:**

*In addition to keynote speaker Higginbotham, participants include (from l) Black Employment Program Manager Jesse Burnett, NEI director Dr. Paul Sieving and NIH deputy director for intramural research Dr. Michael Gottesman.*

PHOTOS: MICHAEL SPENCER

gram stressed “Inspiring Future Leaders.” Higginbotham immediately drew in the youngest attendees by telling her own story of achievement, illustrated with slides of herself as a child not much older than the Whittier students. From her modest upbringing by two school-teacher parents in segregated New Orleans, Higginbotham dreamed early on of pursuing a life in science.

“Beat them with your brains,” she said, recalling the mantra her family often repeated. She went on to complete undergraduate and graduate degrees in chemical engineering at MIT, earning her M.D. from Harvard Medical School.

Now serving at Morehouse School of Medicine as dean and senior vice president for academic affairs, Higginbotham made history when she became the first woman to head a university ophthalmology department.

During an impromptu Q&A session, the Whittier youngsters asked her such monumental questions as, What was her hardest class in college? (organic chemistry) and Did she do all of her science projects herself? (Absolutely. In fact her first science fair project foretold her future concentration: she dissected and compared the eyes of a cow, sheep and pig.)

“Eve is exemplary in what she has accomplished,” said NEI director Dr. Paul Sieving, who introduced her as a personal friend as well as a longtime well-respected colleague. “Let’s take a moment to reflect on what it takes to develop a professional career and a career in medicine.”

In a lecture she titled “Eliminating Disparities in Health is Everyone’s Responsibility,” Higginbotham outlined several key requirements both for tackling such complex issues as HD and for successful career development: study hard and be well-prepared, surround yourself with good influences including your family and mentors, find even small ways to serve the public good and explore experiences beyond the familiar—be an educational risk-taker.

“We have the power to bridge the gap,” she concluded, encouraging the audience to volunteer in their neighborhoods and local institutions. “We have to connect with our community.”

With a captive audience full of young people, the Black History Month observance also became somewhat of a recruitment battleground, with each speaker inviting the students to pursue potential intellectual and professional opportunities at NIH and Morehouse.

NIH deputy director for intramural research Dr. Michael Gottesman, summing up the nation’s shared responsibility to improve the health of its citizens, urged everyone not only to appreciate big-picture global strategy, but also to consider how effective each small individual act



## CSR Takes Peer Review Worldwide

Though peer review to fund science is an American invention that started more than a century ago, its impact on biomedical research worldwide is powerful. Allocating funds through merit still offers the best hope for medical breakthroughs that can improve health for everyone on the planet.

CSR director Dr. Toni Scarpa has been taking that message beyond U.S. borders to bolster the impact of peer review in other countries—Italy, Sweden, Canada, Australia, to name a few.

“It is important to maximize funds for biomedical research,” Scarpa said. “After all, biomedical research is universal and whatever advances or discoveries are made don’t stay within the country. They are adopted and used by different countries and communities.”

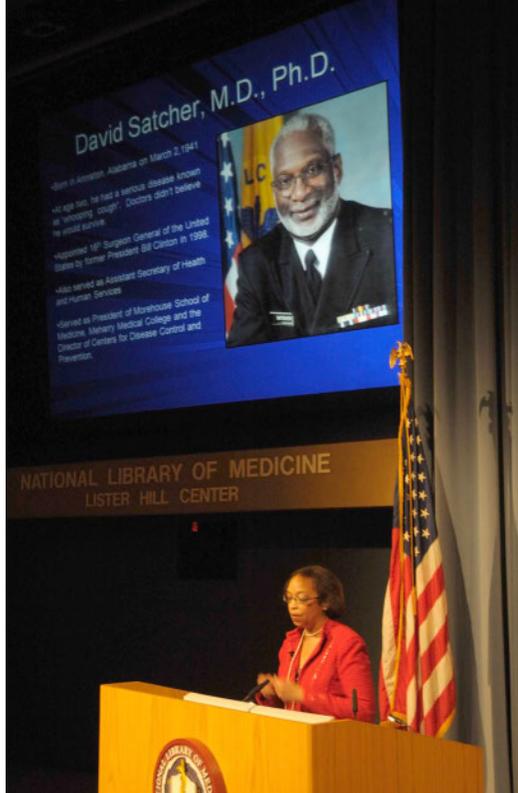
Although more countries are adopting peer review as a means of dispensing funds, most of the funds in many countries are allocated using government appropriations and entitlements. For example, Scarpa said that in many countries, the professors doing biomedical research have already been paid 100 percent by their federal governments, whether they are competitive or not.

“What distinguishes this country is that the lion’s share of money NIH spends on extramural research is based on peer review and distributed exclusively on merit,” he said. “So it is vital to help different countries recognize that distributing more funds through peer review would benefit not only their respective countries, but also the health of the people on this planet.”

Recently, Scarpa traveled to Italy to help revolutionize how its government funds biomedical research. His work had a big impact on helping Italy adopt a competitive peer review system that more closely parallels NIH’s system. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has asked CSR to help get things started by reviewing about 1,500 applications for the Italian government in 2009.

“We are doing what we can to inform different countries of the best practices and various modalities that we are using that have worked or not worked, with the goal of encouraging more funding of merit-based biomedical research,” Scarpa said. “We are here to help make that happen.”

CSR’s outreach has paid off in more ways than one. Other countries have methods that helped NIH improve its peer review. —*Esmeralda Barnes*



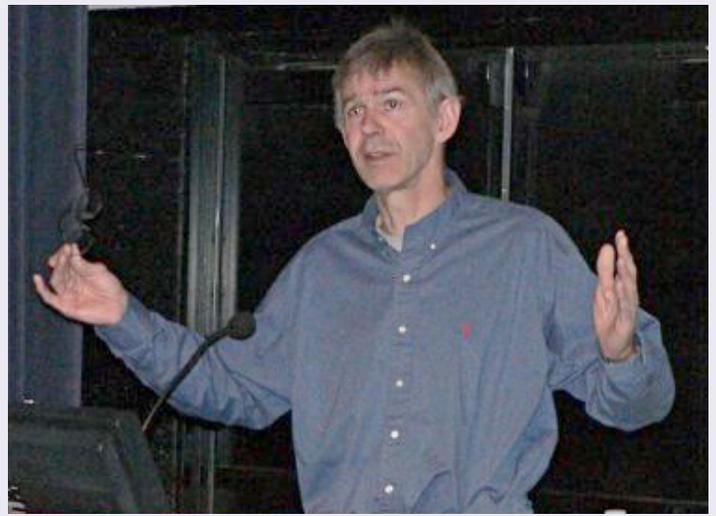
*Keynote Higginbotham discusses the importance of surrounding oneself with positive mentors and role models. She mentioned former U.S. surgeon general Dr. David Satcher, shown on screen behind her, by name.*

becomes to the whole. “Can we do better?” he asked. “To echo our president, ‘Yes, we can.’”

NIH acting director Dr. Raynard Kington, in opening remarks, put the celebration in context: “Science has always been known as a forward-looking enterprise,” he said. “The work of scientists here at NIH is dedicated to creating a healthier future for all people. So why do we as scientists look back at history? Why do we celebrate Black History Month?”

For the lessons bygone days can teach us, he answered. Beyond the many wise—but often over-used—platitudes about the need to study history, “it’s only when we look to the past that we can fully appreciate what the past has to tell us.

“This is why NIH proudly celebrates Black History Month every year,” he continued. “As we sit here just weeks after the historic inauguration of the first African-American president of the United States, we have a special opportunity to learn more about the many contributions of African Americans to the history of this country. We can reflect on how these contributions shaped our history and our present society and consider how best we can draw from them, learn from them and be inspired by them to create a better future for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.”



## BIOWULF

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

**Above:**  
*Clinical Center radiologist Dr. Ronald Summers (l) and NIDDK's Dr. Ad Bax, an NMR spectroscopist*

PHOTOS: MICHAEL SPENCER, STEVE BAILEY

presentations offered a smorgasbord of recent intramural research using the cluster.

A cluster is a group of linked computers that interconnect so smartly over a fast network that they effectively form a single computer. It's a bit like a hive, each cell humming with bees working in concert.

But instead of honey, Biowulf, with its massive computational power, produces enough information to accelerate intramural research in many fields: imaging, genomics, bioinformatics, structural modeling, molecular dynamics and statistics.

"Each Biowulf node looks like your desktop computer," explained Biowulf's architect Dr. Steven Fellini of CIT's Helix Systems staff. "Its power comes from the overlying software."

The software supports more than 200 applications in all domains.

The first clusters were invented more than 10 years ago at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md., and were named Beowulf, after the Old English epic poem. Beowulf is a warrior who slays not only a monster and his mother; he also knocks off a dragon that's unwise enough to mess with him.

So the cluster's name is a play on words: Biowulf is Beowulf for bioscience. There is indeed a heroic element in its speed and scale.

"What makes a large cluster so special," Fellini continues, "is that it lets you do in a few months what would otherwise take hundreds of years."

NIDDK's Dr. Ad Bax, an NMR spectroscopist, confirmed how vital Biowulf has been to his lab's research in protein structure generation: "We completely depend on cluster computing," he said. Without Biowulf, they would have had to wait for months for computations to complete: "We would have been dead in the water."

Beyond the bench to the bedside, Clinical Center radiologist Dr. Ronald Summers presented a virtual colonoscopy project using noninvasive CT scans.

Thanks to Biowulf, the computer can find and colorize polyps in 3 dimensions without using optical (invasive) colonoscopy. The technology, currently licensed, is pending FDA approval.

With colon cancer the second leading cause of cancer death, and only 39 percent of Americans over age 50 getting screened, virtual colonoscopy may be a solution, Summers said.

Happy Birthday, Biowulf! 🎂

## feedback

Have a question about some aspect of working at NIH? You can post anonymous queries at [www.nih.gov/nihrecord/index.htm](http://www.nih.gov/nihrecord/index.htm) (click on the Feedback icon) and we'll try to provide answers.

**Feedback:** Would it be possible for NIH to install lighted crosswalks on campus? I have seen these in various communities in the area—strips of blinking lights at pedestrian crosswalks. Especially in the late afternoon or early evening, it can be difficult to notice the crosswalks and anyone who may be crossing.

**Answer from the Office of Research Facilities:** The Office of Research Facilities investigated the potential for lighted crosswalks on campus several years ago and decided it would be too expensive.

**Feedback:** As someone who goes to the B1 cafeteria in Bldg. 10 on a daily basis, I am used to seeing people having lunch there in scrubs, lab coats and other types of working attire. I am not paranoid and I don't mind if someone (who may work in construction) has a little dirt on his/her shirt. But I find it irresponsible, in fact plain wrong, when people wear their scrubs and lab coats. Bldg. 10 is home to a lot of patient-related work and this troubles me most: people in scrubs effectively a) carry their patient/hospital/lab environment to the common lunch area, and b) carry back food to their patients! I find this behavior to be in violation of common practice (and common sense as well). Such two-way contamination of places that should be separate could easily be avoided by leaving scrubs and lab coats where they belong. I assume that NIH has some policy in place regulating this issue. If so, this is a policy worth enforcing.



**Answer from the Office of Research Services:** Multiple NIH policies already prohibit lab coats, scrubs, gloves and other garments used in a laboratory or for animal care from being worn in public areas. Generally, they should not be worn outside of the laboratory area and definitely not in cafeteria space.

NIH is aware of the problem—including issues in cafeterias, on public transportation and in other public areas—and is working to better educate staff of this policy. The Division of Occupational Health and Safety, ORS, has tried to raise awareness via training sessions, posters at the NIH Research Festival and signs and stickers on laboratory doors, animal facilities and outside cafeterias, including in Bldg. 10. However, as an employee, you can also help by reminding your colleagues when you see it happening.

**Feedback:** Can we please get Eurest to post the nutritional content of the food served at NIH?

**Answer from ORS:** Eurest says there is too much variability in its chefs' recipes, so it does not provide the information. However by the end of March, the nutritional information for Au Bon Pain, Sbarro's and other commercial vendors along with the USDA Guide to Better Nutrition and Meal Planning will be posted on the Food/Concession Services web site at <http://does.ors.od.nih.gov/food/index.htm>.

*Posters reminding employees about leaving lab coats in the lab have been posted in strategic locations across campus.*

### NIDA Study Shows That Ritalin Causes Changes in Brain Reward Areas

Investigators funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse have shown that the medication methylphenidate (Ritalin), which is commonly prescribed to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), can cause physical changes in neurons in reward regions of mouse brains—in some cases, these effects overlapped with those of cocaine. Both methylphenidate and cocaine are in the class of drugs known as psychostimulants. While methylphenidate is widely prescribed, this study highlights the need for more research into its long-term effects on the brain. These research findings were published Feb. 3 in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

“Studies to date suggest that prescribed use of methylphenidate in patients with ADHD does not increase their risk for subsequent addiction. However non-medical use of methylphenidate and other stimulant medications can lead to addiction as well as a variety of other health consequences,” said NIDA director Dr. Nora Volkow. “This study highlights the fact that we know very little about how methylphenidate affects the structure of and communication between brain cells.”

Added lead author Dr. Yong Kim, “Methylphenidate, which is thought to be a fairly innocuous compound, can have structural and biochemical effects in some regions of the brain that can be even greater than those of cocaine. Further studies are needed to determine the behavioral implications of these changes and to understand the mechanisms by which these drugs affect synapse formation.”

### Abnormal Cells Prefigure Leukemia Diagnosis

Researchers have shown that abnormal white blood cells can be present in patients’ blood more than 6 years before diagnosis of a chronic form of lymphocytic leukemia. This finding may lead to a better understanding of the cellular changes that characterize the earliest stages of the disease and how it progresses. The study, led by researchers at the National Cancer Insti-

tute and the Food and Drug Administration, was published in the Feb. 12 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL) is a blood cancer that usually progresses slowly over many years. In this disease, abnormal white blood cells called B-cells accumulate in the blood and the bone marrow. The lymph nodes, spleen and other organs may also be affected. Although CLL is the most common form of leukemia in adults in Western countries, little is known about what causes the disease or how it develops.

“Our findings indicate that [the abnormal cells are] present in virtually all of CLL patients prior to full-blown disease,” said Dr. Ola Landgren of NCI. “This important discovery provides novel insights into the natural history of CLL and will open new fields of investigation for understanding its causes.” The risk of developing CLL for individuals with [the abnormal cells] appears to be low—on average, it is estimated that each year, only about 1 percent of them will develop CLL, he noted.

### Genes Yield Hints About Dosage of Clot Preventer

In a large-scale study and an upcoming clinical trial, NIH scientists address one of the trickiest issues in prescribing medicine—how to quickly optimize each patient’s dosage of the common blood-thinning drug warfarin. One of the most widely prescribed drugs in the world, warfarin is used to prevent blood clots that can lead to heart attacks, strokes or even death. The drug is challenging for doctors to prescribe because the ideal dosage for each person varies widely and is hard to predict, yet is crucial for the patient’s safety.

Using information from thousands of genetically and geographically diverse patients, an international team of researchers developed a way to use genetic information from patients that could help doctors better determine optimal warfarin doses. The results of the analysis are published in the Feb. 19 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Each person responds differently to warfarin. One person may need 10 times more of the drug than another, so it’s challenging to figure out where to start. The study revealed that when genetic information was included, the predictions of ideal dosages were more accurate, especially for patients at the low or high ends of the dosing range.



*According to NIDA-funded research, methylphenidate (Ritalin), which is commonly prescribed to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, can cause physical changes in neurons in reward regions of mouse brains.*



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

### Pelvic Pain

Healthy women are needed for a study investigating the role of hormones and genes in pelvic pain and exploring better approaches to treatment. If you are age 30-50, consider participating in this study. All study-related tests are provided at no cost. Compensation is provided. Refer to study 04-CH-0056.

### Healthy Volunteers Needed

Healthy volunteers are needed for a study designed for the collection of stem cells from the 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 years of age 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 or visit [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov). Se habla español.

### Research Funders Collaborate To Reduce Childhood Obesity

A new National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) was launched Feb. 19 to accelerate progress on reversing the epidemic of overweight and obesity among U.S. youth. The initiative brings together the expertise and resources of NIH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

Current NCCOR members at NIH include the Division of Nutrition Research Coordination, NCI, NHLBI, NICHD, NIDDK and the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research.

NCCOR aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of research on childhood obesity. It will evaluate new and existing prevention approaches, rapidly assess promising policy changes and speed the application of interventions that work.

“Childhood obesity increases the risk of many chronic diseases and other problems,” said NIH acting director Dr. Raynard Kington. “By working together on key research challenges, and translating research into action at the individual, family and community levels, we can accelerate progress in reversing this public health challenge.”

Dr. James S. Marks, senior vice president and director of RWJF’s health group, said, “We’re going to build on our organizations’ complementary strengths. In 5 years, we hope to be able to say that NCCOR played a key role in reversing childhood obesity rates.”

NCCOR will focus on efforts that have great potential to benefit children, teens and their families and the communities in which they live. It will put a special emphasis on the populations in which obesity rates are highest, including African-American, Hispanic, Native American and Asian/Pacific Islander children and children living in low-income communities.

“Today, 12 million children and adolescents in the United States are obese and another 11 million are overweight,” said Dr. Janet Collins, director of CDC’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. “We believe that more coordinated research will be able to have major impact in solving this critical health issue.”

Visit [www.nccor.org](http://www.nccor.org) for more information.

### Grady Speaks at International Nursing Conference

National Institute of Nursing Research director Dr. Patricia Grady recently delivered the keynote address at the 6<sup>th</sup> biennial Joanna Briggs Colloquium, which was held in association with the 12<sup>th</sup> International Nursing Research Conference in Cordoba, Spain. As she stated, the nurse scientists attending this colloquium “have come from all corners of the globe to engage in an exchange of nursing knowledge without borders; to reaffirm nursing’s commitment to eliminate barriers to global health; and to unite in support of relevant, evidence-based research to address world health issues.”

The Joanna Briggs Institute, based in Australia, is an internationally recognized organizational leader in the movement toward evidence-based practice. The theme of this year’s colloquium was Eliminating Borders of Knowledge.

Grady reflected on the breadth and significance of nursing science to clinical practice. “From the community to the clinic to the laboratory, nurses are leaders in improving the health of the world. Nurses of all nations advocate for safer water, provide disaster relief, vaccinate against infectious diseases, educate mothers on nutrition and safety and develop relevant research questions that drive tomorrow’s discoveries and improve health care worldwide.”

She highlighted several international health projects supported by NINR, including: HIV prevention among youths in Mexico, Malawi and Thailand; treatment of high blood pressure among blacks in South Africa; and nursing workforce issues in countries around the world.

Grady also spoke about the strong support for international research and training at NIH, including the International Clinical Research Training Scholars and Fellows Program, sponsored through the Fogarty International Center.

She urged participants to “take advantage of opportunities to build the global nursing research community.” She encouraged nurse scientists to publish in internationally reviewed journals and urged educators to incorporate international health care learning experiences into nursing curricula.

In conclusion, Grady said, “Let us all be international partners in science, communicating with and connecting to our global colleagues in health throughout the world.”—Ray Bingham

## Relinquishes Brutal Commute CIT's Graham Ends Long Federal Career

By Christina Bravo McCormick

There was one less car on the road on Jan. 5—did you notice? Dr. Dale Graham was not rising from slumber at the typical 3 a.m. wake-up time, not driving the 70 miles (one-way) to her office in Bethesda and not logging in on the NIH Network. Graham retired from the Center for Information Technology after serving 28 years with the federal government. Although she will miss the work and the people, the commute was another story.

Many at NIH know that she was one of the first on campus to use a Mac. Others are aware of her work establishing the NIH Intramural Database (NIDB), a tool that provides data on intramural research and investigators. Still others knew her as a llama farmer living in Virginia with pastures of gentle, intelligent animals. Graham is well known in the community after working in three institutes and having an instrumental role in the NIH-wide NIDB. Her efforts have touched many.

In 1980, Graham was recruited to NIH as a cancer expert by NCI's Dr. Gilbert Smith. NIH had no cell phones or PCs, relying instead on fax machines and intercoms. "It was a dream come true to work for NIH," Graham remembers.

After 3 years at NCI, she transferred to NIDDK as a special expert and biologist. With a Ph.D. in molecular biology, Graham had developed a passion for mainframes in graduate school and even brought her "teletype" machine with her to NIH.

In 1990, she was recruited by then DCRT's Dr. Brian McLaughlin to supply both Mac and scientific support. "Both careers are amazingly similar; they each involve spending hours and days trying to figure out a better way to do something," she explains.

In 1997, Graham joined CIT's Division of Enterprise and Custom Applications to begin one of the most challenging projects of her career.

"Dale arrived in our office to discuss setting up what became the NIDB and was confronted by a list about 3 pages long of everything we wanted in it. She didn't blanch, but in her own inimitable way rolled up her sleeves and got to work," said Dr. Joan Schwartz of the Office of



Intramural Research, the current "owner" of the NIDB. The NIDB project began as a better method to manage aspects of the intramural program but it became a successful approach at increasing communication at NIH.

"It wasn't until I was about to leave NCI that I started to know who was doing what and who I would need to go to for answers to certain questions," Graham recalls. Since 1998, when NIDB was first released, Graham has been at the helm as program manager. "It's hard to figure out who is doing what across NIH, and this database does all the work for you." While only five institutes participated at first, currently the NIDB collects, stores and reports data from all ICs in the Intramural Research Program while also integrating with the Research, Condition and Disease Categorization (RCDC) Project. Scientific reporting is now linked inextricably with the NIDB.

"[Graham is] the ultimate in responsiveness, the embodiment of the NIDB and someone we will miss very much," Schwartz said. Don't worry about the NIDB continuing on, though. The new program manager, Kyung Torrence, has some big shoes to fill, but plans on not only continuing the legacy but also making enhancements.

Graham leaves NIH with some advice for her colleagues: "Continue to encourage the positive culture that works with people's strengths and weaknesses. Tolerate the weaknesses and build upon the strengths." 🍌

*Dr. Dale Graham feeds the llamas on her farm near Culpeper, Va., a 70-mile commute from Bethesda.*