

nih record

Volunteers Help Housekeeping Staff Learn English

By Rich McManus

They say charity begins at home, but it can also take root in the workplace, as NIAID's Maria G. Hessie has proven by establishing lunch-hour classes to help NIH's foreign-born housekeepers learn English.

A native of Mexico and 11-year NIH veteran, Hessie was approached in 2006 by a housekeeper who asked for help learning English. Hessie agreed to tutor the woman, but on the day they were to meet for their initial session, the housekeeper showed up with five other housekeepers, all Hispanic, most from El Salvador. Two years later, Hessie's tutoring program had a name—Volunteer Program for English Proficiency (VPEP)—and now attracts 45-50 students taught year-round by a growing cadre of volunteer teachers who meet in Bldgs. 10 and 31.



VPEP founder Maria G. Hessie (c) is flanked by Giovanna Guerrero (l) of NINDS and Rebecca Marci Brown of NCI.

SEE VOLUNTEERS, PAGE 6

New Board Holds Inaugural Meeting, Discusses Possible NIDA-NIAAA Merger

By Rich McManus

The two most recent past NIH directors returned to campus in late April to address the inaugural meeting of the scientific management review board (SMRB), a body that was created by the NIH Reform Act of 2006 to survey, at least once every 7 years, management issues that transcend the mandates of other high-level NIH oversight bodies.

The board undertook a number of questions, including whether NIH's current structure is best suited to its mission and, more specifically, whether there are grounds to consider merging NIDA and NIAAA. The 2-day meeting also looked at NIH's Intramural Research Program (IRP) and the Clinical Center, both of which have struggled with budget difficulties in recent years (see sidebar).

Dr. Elias Zerhouni, who left the directorship last fall, said he asked Congress to approve the SMRB "because I thought it was something

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'The Heart of the Legacy'

Office of NIH History Spotlights Research Physicians

By Belle Waring

"Until lions write history," says the African proverb, "the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunters." Between the tale as it is written and the struggle on the ground, there may be more questions than answers. From whose vantage is history told and how do we read its lessons?

That was part of the challenge of the Office of NIH History's recent 2-day conference at the Cloister, "The Role of the Research Physician: From Golden Past to Threatened Future?"

"Your conference raises a set of issues that goes to the very heart of the legacy and enduring identity of the National Institutes of Health," said NIH acting director Dr. Raynard Kington.

History office director Dr. Robert Martensen noted that in contrast to the "golden past"—roughly 1950 to the mid-1970s—the number of research physicians is dropping nationwide.

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ABOVE • Officers from several jurisdictions participated in NIH's observance of National Police Week. See story on p. 12.

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

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

Editor

Richard McManus
rm26q@nih.gov

Assistant Editor

Carla Garnett
cg9s@nih.gov

Staff Writers

Jan Ehrman
je48b@nih.gov

Belle Waring
bw174w@nih.gov

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NIH Artists on View at Clinical Center

Be sure to check out the artistic talent of the NIH community at the 2009 NIH Juried Art Show on display until July 3 in Library Hall (outside of the NIH Library) in Bldg. 10. A record 580 artworks were submitted, and the show features 43 artists. The art ranges from paintings, drawings and photography to pottery, glass and weavings.



A submission by NIAID's Alisa Khomyanina

"Works were entered from every corner of the NIH community, from postbacs to PIs, from science writers to IT specialists, from Frederick to Executive Boulevard and from nearly all of the institutes and centers," said NHGRI scientist Dr. Tyrone Spady, who led the recent call for submissions. Besides Spady, jurists included NCI's Sandy Young and Crystal Parmele and Lillian Fitzgerald, both of the CC gallery office.

Annual Camp Fantastic BBQ Is a Carnival

The annual Camp Fantastic BBQ celebration will be held on Tuesday, June 16 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on the Bldg. 31 patio. Themed "Life is a carnival!" the event will feature food from High Point Farm, live music from Street Life, a duel by the Knights of Medieval Times, carnival games and more. While enjoying your Open Pit BBQ, take time to get a caricature portrait and play games (ring toss, bean bag throw, etc.) for great prizes. BBQ tickets are \$9, which includes choice of two sandwiches (pulled pork BBQ, pulled chicken BBQ or hot dog), coleslaw, potato chips, ice cream, popcorn and drink. There will also be a raffle to help support Special Love/Camp Fantastic. Tickets are two for \$5, five for \$10 and 12 for \$20. Prizes include Washington Wizards tickets, weekend getaway to Gettysburg, dinner for two at Outback, attraction tickets and more. Purchase tickets for food or raffle at any R&W store or at the BBQ.

Graduate & Professional School Fair, June 30

The Office of Intramural Training & Education invites summer interns and postbacs to participate in the NIH Graduate & Professional School Fair on Tuesday, June 30 at the Natcher

Conference Center and Lister Hill Auditorium from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The fair will provide an opportunity for NIH summer interns (especially those in college) and postbacs to prepare for the next step in their careers by exploring educational programs leading to the Ph.D., M.D., D.D.S., M.D./Ph.D. and other graduate and professional degrees. More than 100 colleges and universities will be sending representatives of their graduate schools, medical and dental schools, schools of public health and other biomedically relevant programs to the fair in the hopes of recruiting NIH trainees.

The day will also include workshops on creating an education plan and interviewing, plus panels on getting to graduate and professional school and careers in public health. A group of Medical Scientist Training Program directors will discuss M.D./Ph.D. programs. Exhibits will be open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Workshops will be clustered at the beginning of the day. A list of colleges and universities planning to attend and registration information can be found at www.training.nih.gov.

NIH Sponsors National Safety Month Activities

The Division of Occupational Health and Safety, ORS, will be hosting several Safety Month activities, both on and off campus, in June. DOHS provides a wide array of safety services to the NIH community including: the automated external defibrillator (AED) program, free CPR classes, pest management, food service sanitation, indoor air quality testing, ergonomics consultation, safety shoe program and laboratory, general safety and biosafety consultation.

DOHS personnel will be present, along with staff from the Division of Radiation Safety, Division of Environmental Protection and the Employee Assistance Program, to answer questions and provide interactive learning activities pertaining to each day's topic.

Safety Training - Thursday, June 4, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Bldg. 10 B1 cafeteria

Spring Cleaning Safely - Monday, June 15, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Bldg. 50 Rm. 1227

Personal Protective Equipment - Thursday, June 18, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., 5635 Fishers Ln. cafeteria

Ergonomics and Indoor Air Quality - Wednesday, June 24, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Bldg. 31 cafeteria

For more information about DOHS, visit www.dohs.ors.od.nih.gov. Call (301) 496-2346 to contact your safety specialist regarding DOHS or Safety Month activities.

Attention Motorcyclists, Scooter Drivers

The 18th annual National Motorcycle & Scooter Ride to Work Day will be held on Monday, June 15. For more information about the observance, visit www.ridetowork.org/.



Dance, Hike, Move!

The Wellness Train: Get on Board

By Belle Waring

“Spring into Health,” sponsored by the OD and the Office of AIDS Research, rocked the house—or the tent, actually—in its May 4 kick-off ceremony.

“I’m the only person ever to fail yoga,” quipped NIH acting deputy director/NIDCR director Dr. Lawrence Tabak in opening remarks.

The event was part of the NIH HealthierFeds President’s Challenge, designed to include both federal employees and contractors, from folks who already practice an active lifestyle to those who flunked yoga.

For 6 weeks, the activity goal is 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week. Or sign up for the program’s “champion” level. By participating, you can accumulate President’s Challenge points for your IC.

Registration ends May 29; the Challenge runs through July 24.

Wellness yields many benefits, Tabak said, including boosts in productivity, morale, energy, confidence and camaraderie.

And dance tips. As the deejays cut loose, the Fitness Center’s Terry Bowers and ORS director Dr. Alfred Johnson got everybody out on the floor for the coolest zumba dancing east of the Rockies.

“Hips!” Bowers called out. “Are you finding them?”

Zumba, an aerobic exercise routine inspired by Latin dance, lets you earn Challenge points while boogying. The opening day demo was the first of several free classes; the full schedule is at <http://oarwellness.oar.nih.gov/events.html>.

On May 6, the second annual Take-A-Hike Day, sponsored by the Office of Research Ser-



vices, featured the Fitness Center’s Robert Geter leading the warm-up in front of Bldg. 1. After a week of spring rain, the sun broke through and the scent of newly mown grass lifted everyone’s spirits.

Over 1,600 people had signed up for the walk and fun-run around the Bethesda campus, with real-time estimates of 1,800 participants.

Before the opening whistles, NIH acting director Dr. Raynard Kington presented the 2008 HealthierFeds Award to NIDCD.

He also bestowed this year’s Take-A-Hike Day participation awards: NCMHD took 1st place, Fogarty 2nd, NCCAM 3rd and NHGRI 4th.

“My institute didn’t win this year,” said NIAID epidemiologist Dr. David Morens. “Everybody’s working on the [H1N1] flu.”

To register for HealthierFeds, visit <http://dats.ors.od.nih.gov/wellness/healthierFeds.htm> or contact Chris Gaines at gainesc@mail.nih.gov or (301) 451-3631.

Top, l:

Spring into Health’s opening day ceremonies rocked the house.

Top, r:

An estimated 1,800 folks got the lead out on NIH’s second annual Take-A-Hike Day.

Below:

Zumba dancing earned these NIH’ers Challenge points for their ICs while boogying to the beat.

PHOTOS: MICHAEL SPENCER





At left, immediate past NIH director Dr. Elias Zerhouni addresses the SMRB. Above, Dr. Harold Varmus, NIH director 1993-1999, offers views.

PHOTOS: ERNIE BRANSON

SMRB

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

this institution was missing...there was no mechanism in place to account for fundamental changes in science.”

The SMRB was Zerhouni’s response to a series of reports and articles, dating to 2001, purporting to tell NIH how to organize and govern itself. Rather than let “periodic ad hoc looks at NIH”—including opinion pieces in journals and reports by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, among others—dictate NIH’s direction, Zerhouni felt the SMRB could set the intellectual tone from the inside.

Prescriptions generated from outside NIH “fail

my number one test,” he said. “Any change must be fundamentally steeped in science. Otherwise we are talking about artificial, unsustainable arrangements.”

Opposed to structural changes such as reducing NIH’s 27 institutes and centers into a half-dozen clusters sharing similar missions, Zerhouni argued instead for functional change that responds to the question, “What is the science today and how is it served better?”

He nonetheless agreed that some changes in science do suggest structural change. He thinks it’s valid to ask if, since addiction is common to

Budget Crunch Challenges IRP, Clinical Center

Five years of flat NIH budgets have posed challenges to both the Intramural Research Program and the Clinical Center, according to their directors. Declining patient enrollment at the CC, in addition to the graying of the PI pool and a sharp reduction in the number of clinical trials hosted here are also causes of concern.

Dr. Michael Gottesman, NIH deputy director for intramural research, told the SMRB that the IRP has experienced a decline of 16 percent in real buying power in the past 5 years. Declining budgets have “made new recruitments and the development of new research programs more difficult,” he said. “Federal requirements such as very stringent rules restricting outside activities of research personnel, travel restrictions, salary caps and other growing administrative requirements have affected the NIH’s ability to recruit and retain top researchers.”

He called the challenges “substantial but not insurmountable” and empha-

sized that the IRP has continued to thrive despite limitations.

“The precise role of the Intramural Research Program needs to be better defined,” Gottesman told the board. He also called for speedier translation of basic research to the bedside: The IRP “should be able to bring laboratory innovations to clinical practice in months rather than years.”

Gottesman also called for more partnerships “so that the overhead of maintaining 23 separate intramural research programs [out of NIH’s 27 institutes and centers] is reduced.”

CC director Dr. John Gallin said average daily inpatient occupancy at the hospital is at about 64 percent; in FY 2008, about 35 percent of the available beds were unused. “Sixty-five percent inpatient occupancy is just at the threshold for sustaining vital hospital functions and training of young clinical investigators,” he said.

Since FY 1994, the total NIH budget has

more than doubled and the IRP budget has increased 64 percent, but the CC budget has only increased 15 percent, he explained.

Gallin is also concerned about the drop in new research protocols from 250 in 2003 to only 150 in 2008 and a 42 percent decrease in the number of tenure-track PIs on clinical protocols in the past 5 years. He also reported that the average age of a clinical PI in 1998 was 46, and is now 50.

His recommendations to the SMRB included tying the core CC budget to inflationary increases, removing the prohibition on co-mingling intramural and extramural dollars (which would boost the CRC as the site of collaborative clinical trial expertise), offering more competitive salaries as a recruitment/retention incentive and improving CC governance, which is currently hampered by a mix of authorities.

both drug and alcohol use, NIDA and NIAAA should merge into a National Institute of Diseases of Addiction. "I think it's irresponsible not to consider a change," he said.

Former director Dr. Harold Varmus, who left NIH in late 1999, said he was more interested in urging NIH and the SMRB to tackle the potential difficulties of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act than in concerning himself with the agenda of a board that only reports to Congress once every 7 years.

"My biggest concern as an outsider is how NIH will manage ARRA," he said. "There's a pretty significant potential dilemma once the 2 years are up. By 2011, there's the danger of many more grants than you can possibly fund."

Varmus said he was a "happy camper as director and loved the job," but pointed out a number of "pretty profound impediments. I didn't have enough authority or funds to get things done that needed doing." He also said he was "unhappy about the number of people who reported to me...nobody can manage an institution with that kind of structure." He also wanted the power to deny renewal of IC director appointments, noting, "There are very few institute directors who do this successfully forever."

Like Zerhouni, Varmus said, "I personally don't think there's anything wrong with fusing NIDA and NIAAA, and maybe some intramural research programs." He also said he saw no reason why the NCI director should be a presidential appointment, nor why NCI should have the privilege of bypass budgets. "NCI is okay as the institute with the largest budget, but it shouldn't get any other favors."

The SMRB voted unanimously to create workgroups to consider a NIDA-NIAAA merger and to deal with the sustainability of both the CC and the IRP. It will meet again in the fall. 📍

Plain Language Awards Ceremony, June 2 in Lipsett Amphitheater

Acting NIH director Dr. Raynard Kington will host the 9th annual NIH Plain Language Awards ceremony on Tuesday, June 2 at 1 p.m. in Lipsett Amphitheater, Bldg. 10. Along with special guest speaker, Jonathan Capehart, award-winning editorial writer for the *Washington Post*, Kington will honor a group of NIH writers and editors who have developed communication products that are exceptional for their clarity and focus. All are welcome to attend.

NIH began its plain language program in 2000 and held its first award ceremony in March 2001. That year, the plain language coordinating committee received more than 100 entries. Each year since then, the number of entries has increased. For 2008, the committee received more than 159 nominations including web sites, exhibits, news releases, fact sheets, newsletters, calendars, manuals and other written products. Members of the committee, which includes representatives from every institute, center and the director's office, evaluated submissions.

Capehart is a Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial writer at the *Post*, specializing in national politics and environmental issues. Before that, he was a member of the *New York Daily News* editorial board. He then became national affairs columnist for *Bloomberg News* and left to work as a policy adviser to Michael Bloomberg in his successful campaign for mayor of New York City. Capehart and the *Daily News* editorial board won the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing for their series on the Apollo Theater in Harlem.

The Plain Language Awards ceremony will conclude with light refreshments. Sign language interpretation will be provided. For other reasonable accommodation, call (301) 443-8650. For more information, visit www.nih.gov/clearcommunication/plainlanguage.htm.



Chew Receives Professional Service Award

The Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington recently presented Dr. Emily Chew (second from l) with its Professional Service Award at the annual "Night of Vision" charity gala. The honor, established in 1987, is given to the person who best exemplifies the spirit of the society's mission and a fervent commitment to the vision community. In remarks to attendees, NEI director Dr. Paul Sieving (r) summarized Chew's accomplishments, saying, "Her passion for the field of ophthalmology is clear, her insight unparalleled. I am proud to call her my colleague, and grateful that she has chosen to share her vision with NEI for the past 22 years." Chew currently serves as deputy director of the Division of Epidemiology and Clinical Applications and as medical officer of the Division of Biometry and Epidemiology. Also on hand were WJLA-TV's Arch Campbell (second from r) and Dr. Suleiman Alibhai (l) of the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington.



VOLUNTEERS

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Above:

Sandeep Nair (l) of NINDS, who recently joined VPEP as a tutor, and NCI's Jeanette Contreras teach a class in Bldg. 31.

"I started it because it is necessary to help others," said Hessie, a program specialist in the Laboratory of Immunology who came to the U.S. from Mexico 20 years ago. Because of her background, she sympathizes deeply with the plight of poor immigrants. "I felt I needed to do something."

Hessie was moved by her first student's desperation to learn and conversed with her, at first, only in Spanish. "She came to me almost crying. She was sad, disappointed and depressed. She said she needed to make a better life for her family."

Hessie first advised her to go to school, but the woman pleaded that she had no time. "Then I will help you," Hessie decided.

Hessie still recalls the date she committed to teach. "It was Oct. 23, 2006, a Monday. We made a date for Wednesday at lunch. I thought she wasn't coming back, because I was pushing her. But she came back with five other students."

Hessie was unprepared with both space and materials and wandered the halls of the CRC until she found an empty room. "We struggled to look for a place to [hold class], but my colleague Karen Murphy helped us find space. She, along with Mary Hash and Suzanne Grefsheim [both of the NIH Library], helped us relocate to a room in the basement of the Bldg. 10 library in November 2006."

Her boss, Dr. Michael Lenardo, was also supportive. "When I mentioned my plan to him, he was impressed and glad with the idea," she said. "He has been a great supporter since then."

Hessie had never taught anyone before—"just

my sons. I wasn't a teacher." But she felt a natural empathy for her students.

To imagine a curriculum, Hessie said, "I put myself in their position. What is most necessary for adults to know?" For the first year and a half, she met her class of six Monday through Friday, but eventually gave the students Fridays off so that they could eat lunch with their friends.

There was no formal textbook during this period, but last January Hessie acquired some books. As news of the class spread by word of mouth, more housekeepers joined. Most are Hispanic, but some are Haitian and speak French/Creole. Only English is spoken in the classroom, however, since VPEP is an English-immersion program.

Hessie has now divided her students into two tracks, low-beginner and high-beginner. Her first six students are still enrolled today, although all had hiatuses in the past 2 years. Most enroll in order to improve their prospects for better jobs.

"All of our teaching is done in groups, and the students correct one another," said Rebecca Marci Brown, a Presidential Management fellow at NCI who joined VPEP in December 2008. Through her association with Young Government Leaders of Bethesda, Brown has recruited new volunteer teachers to VPEP.

Another key recruit for Hessie's program was Jeanette Contreras, an NCI policy analyst she befriended last summer. Contreras had experience recruiting Hispanic high schoolers to consider careers in science. She, along with colleagues Weston Ricks, an NCI budget analyst, and Giovanna Guerrero, a science policy analyst at NINDS, began volunteering at VPEP last summer. Contreras' and Guerrero's links to NIH's Hispanic Employee Organization, and to

Volunteer to Teach English

VPEP classes are held weekly, Monday-Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., in Bldg. 31 and in the basement of Bldg. 10's NIH Library. The program hopes to recruit new volunteers so it can expand to other buildings on campus and at other NIH sites. Volunteer instructors do not need to have teaching experience or know another language. All teaching materials and training will be provided. The only requirement is a commitment to teach class during one lunch period every week. If interested, contact Giovanna Guerrero (guerrerog@mail.nih.gov) for more information.

fellow alumni of the Emerging Leaders Program and the larger intern community at NIH, have been useful in recruiting new teachers.

Ironically, VPEP was the accidental by-product of a failed attempt by Hessie to conduct outreach to the local Hispanic school-age population.

"I had been involved in recruiting blacks, women, people with disabilities and Hispanics to NIH as a member of an NIAID advisory committee," she explains. She had hoped to conduct outreach talks at local high schools with large Hispanic enrollment, but her proposal was rejected on grounds that the kids she was targeting typically don't speak English. She then realized that her most fertile client base was right under her nose.

Hessie is deeply moved by the gratitude of her students. "They are so appreciative," she says. And she is passionate about their ability to better themselves, both socially and economically.

"Our classes also focus on self-confidence, looking people in the eye and speaking loudly enough to be heard," says Brown, who notes that health literacy, too, is an important part of the VPEP curriculum. Adds Contreras, "Some of these people haven't been in a classroom for 20-25 years, so we need to remember that. With our most basic students, we often start out with pictures instead of words."

As VPEP has gathered momentum, Contreras realized that it needed a more formal curriculum and structure, in addition to resources such as textbooks. Last fall, she led the drafting of a grant proposal. Early this year, Brown, through her association with R&W President Randy Schools, successfully helped VPEP win a grant from the Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy. The grant will be used to acquire textbooks, conduct student and teacher assessment, help train volunteers and do community outreach.

"We hope our program will be a model," says Contreras, adding that VPEP volunteer teachers are preparing a handbook for other agencies to use in building their own English as a second language programs.

Brown says other agencies, including HRSA, have expressed interest in hosting programs similar to VPEP. Hessie says she has also had inquiries from private industry.

Contreras hopes to import VPEP to Bldg. 37 or Executive Blvd., where there are high concentrations of prospective students and NIH staff who could volunteer. "But we don't want to grow too

quickly," she cautions.

Hessie says VPEP classes are open to all, but students must be in nonprofessional or non-scientific jobs. "Professionals can go to FAES classes, and can pay. Our clients can't pay."

But that's not to say that VPEP faculty don't profit. "They hug us and thank us," says Brown. "They are an incredibly thoughtful and respectful group of people." She adds that students' gratitude "is often the silver lining of our week. Being around people who are sacrificing so much is very inspiring. It puts things into perspective, especially after a difficult day. It's energizing to be around them."

Hessie agrees that meeting her students relieves the stress of her NIH job. She welcomes inquiries from NIH'ers interested in joining VPEP and can be reached at (301) 496-3981. ●

Harvard's Mooney To Speak on Biomaterials

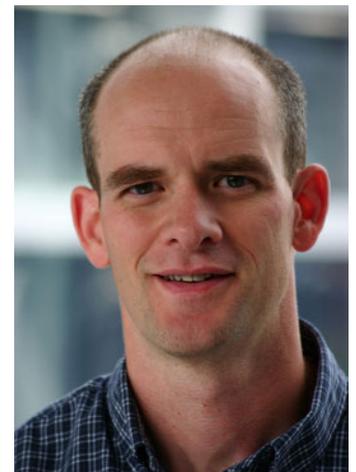
On Friday, June 12 at 2 p.m., Dr. David Mooney will speak on "Materials to Regulate Cell Trafficking *In Vivo*: From Regeneration to Immunotherapies" in Lipsett Amphitheater, Bldg. 10. His talk is part of NIDCR's seminar series From Basic Research to Therapy—The Latest Frontier.

An expert in bioengineering, Mooney will discuss his work on designing versatile, active biomaterials that can program cells *in vivo* to survive, divide, differentiate and migrate to specific sites in the body to heal and regenerate tissues. His laboratory is investigating the use of these innovative biomaterials for applications ranging from regenerative medicine to immunotherapy.

Mooney is the Gordon McKay professor of bioengineering in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at Harvard University. He is also a faculty member of Harvard's Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering. Mooney is a fellow of the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering, an NIH MERIT awardee and a recipient of the National Science Foundation's CAREER award.

If you wish to meet with Mooney during his visit to NIH, contact Dr. Nadya Lumelsky at (301) 594-7703 or 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). The lecture will be videocast live at <http://videocast.nih.gov>.



RESEARCH PHYSICIANS

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History office director Dr. Robert Martensen

PHOTO: ERNIE BRANSON

Ph.D.s now outnumber M.D.s, while M.D.s outnumber M.D.-Ph.D.s.

“The number of M.D.s at NIH among total NIH staff is dropping,” he said, as is the number of M.D.s among new principal investigators in NIH extramural programs.

This workforce trend mirrors the division between fundamental and applied science. For Martensen, this is problematic.

“Was Pasteur doing clinical or basic research?” he asked.

Pasteur, in one of many breakthroughs, ran from his lab to the field and back again to create the first rabies vaccine.

“I’m arguing that [the line between basic and applied] is not that neat,” Martensen continued. “It’s never been that neat. Yet this hierarchy keeps being restated...and the tension over who is doing what is reflected in the division of dollars and embedded in research funding practices.”

How will physician-scientists sustain themselves and their research tradition? Fifteen speakers and commentators weighed in.

Kington traced NIH’s growth from a small Hygienic Laboratory in the U.S. Marine Hospital to a multi-billion-dollar agency, noting how “over nearly three decades, physicians and dual-degree holders have comprised about 30 percent of the PI pool on R01 equivalent grants.”

Meanwhile, as part of NIH’s continuing support of the physician-investigator, the number of mentored career development awards has increased nearly four-fold.

Yet concerns remain. “Proposals by M.D.s have lower success rates than M.D.-Ph.D.s or Ph.D.s,” Kington said. “M.D.s who propose clinical research are funded at lower rates than those who propose non-clinical projects. And M.D.s are less likely to have follow-on research grants.”

He cited the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSAs) as robust opportunities for physician-investigators.

“CTSAs are flexible,” Kington said. “They encourage the development of local models, with results that improve local health and expand clinical research capacity. Moreover, they share and compare their results through a national CTSA network.”

The award adapts to an educational model, as in a CTSA-funded University of Pennsylvania under-

graduate training program. It also works as a community model, as in the Mayo Clinic’s mobile clinical research unit.

Other opportunities for physician-investigators: the NIH Loan Repayment Programs, which encourage promising researchers and scientists to pursue research careers by repaying up to \$35,000 of their qualified student loan debt each year; awards such as Pioneer, New Innovator and EUREKA; and funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

A conference participant objected that universities might be reluctant to take on 2 years of [ARRA-associated] funding “without a re-up.”

“I understand the dilemma,” said Kington. “We have to solicit, review and get the money out the door. But this is unique in the history of our funding stream.”

Dr. Michael Gottesman, NIH deputy director for intramural research, offered suggestions for the future.

A major challenge, both from the public and from Congress, is to fulfill demands to show payoffs for increased funding. Increasingly, Gottesman said, the pressure to produce [breakthroughs] results in specialization, which in turn leads to a loss of perspective.

“Clinical activity is creative activity,” he said, “and a lack of perspective can stifle it.”

He called for interdisciplinary “team science” and a new paradigm in the way research clinicians are recruited.

“We felt the need to rewrite the criteria for tenure,” he said. Moreover, “in order to do clinical research, there is an enormous administrative and paperwork burden. It sucks the life out of clinical investigating...intramural clinical researchers, in concert with the NIH steering committee, could develop better ways to cycle from lab to bedside to lab. There are 11 institutional review boards embedded in the ICs. We could concentrate these into 6 or 7 service centers...with the goal of reviewing a protocol within a few weeks.”

Mentorship is crucial, he said, and time spent with mentees “should be protected time.” In addition, making NIH more family-friendly would help to attract more women candidates.

Finally, he touted the Office of Science Education’s teacher modules, which include specific instruction plans for elementary, middle and high school students.

“I’m enormously excited that our current President is interested in improving...science education,” said Gottesman, ending on a hopeful note. 🗨️

NIEHS Recognized For Excellence in Animal Care

Reviewers described the NIEHS animal care program as “exemplary” during a recent site visit by the council on accreditation of the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) International. Following the visit, the group officially notified NIEHS Comparative Medicine Branch chief Dr. Diane Forsythe of the NIEHS program’s full accreditation.



Dr. Diane Forsythe

PHOTO: STEVE MCCAWE

The decision was based on the institute’s compliance with the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, which covers every aspect of animal care. Prepared by the National Research Council in 1996, the guide represents the gold standard of best practices for more than 750 AAALAC-affiliated government, university, hospital and private laboratories engaged in research using animals.

“This is what’s called a ‘clean’ letter,” Forsythe said of the notification, “because there are no suggestions for improvement, [which is] very unusual” in this rigorous review process. “The use of the word ‘exemplary’ is also very rare,” she added, “and we’re very happy about that.”

In his letter to Forsythe, council on accreditation president Dr. John Bradfield wrote that reviewers were especially impressed by the institute’s knowledgeable and committed staff, well-equipped and maintained facilities, inclusive occupational health and safety program and comprehensive training.

“AAALAC accreditation is voluntary and is a symbol of quality,” Forsythe said. “It shows that we’re willing to go above and beyond what the regulations and requirements are, that we’re very committed to having an outstanding animal care program.”

Forsythe shares praise with her 22-member staff and 60 contractors who support the animal care and use program. She also acknowledges the contributions of many others in the institute for their “tremendous support of the program.”

According to Forsythe, in 1972 NIEHS became the first NIH institute to be accredited by AAALAC, which was formed in 1965. The main NIH campus received full accreditation in 1993.—Eddy Ball

International Women’s Day Lecture

Research Team Studies Malaria in Pregnant Women, Newborns

Dr. Diane Wallace Taylor, professor at the University of Hawaii and Georgetown University, and her longtime collaborator, Dr. Rose G. F. Leke, director of the Biotechnology Center, University of Yaounde, Cameroon, recently presented an overview of the extremely complex interactions between malaria parasites, pregnant women and their babies. Their talks were part of the International Women’s Day Lecture at NIH’s Lawton Chiles International House. NIAID co-hosted the event with the Fogarty International Center.

Taylor and Leke have collaborated since 1990 on studying the effects of malaria in pregnant women and their newborns in Cameroon, where residents are bitten by malaria-infected mosquitoes nearly every other day. The researchers’ work focuses on improving the diagnosis of malaria in pregnant women and identifying changes in immune responses to malaria infection during pregnancy.

The team is leading a study that is enrolling pregnant women receiving intermittent preventive treatment, the standard protocol in Cameroon. In the protocol, pregnant women are treated every other month with antimalarial medication. The goal is to learn when malaria treatment offers the greatest benefit to pregnant women and their newborns and how prevention of malaria during pregnancy influences the immune responses for their babies to malaria.

Other speakers at the event included Tamara Lewis-Johnson, NIAID Women’s Health Program manager; Dr. Michael Johnson, FIC deputy director; Dr. Janine Austin Clayton, ORWH deputy director; and Dr. Judith Hedje, regional program officer, Sub-Saharan Africa, Office of Global Research.

Krasnewich Joins NIGMS



Dr. Donna Krasnewich recently joined NIGMS as a program director in the Division of Genetics and Developmental Biology. She is managing research grants in the area of the genetic basis of human biology and will develop new initiatives leading to a better understanding of the genetics underlying human phenotypes. She comes to NIGMS from NHGRI, where she held several intramural positions, including deputy clinical director. Her research focus is metabolically and biochemically based developmental delay disorders, especially those involving defects in sugar metabolism. Krasnewich earned an M.D. and Ph.D. in pharmacology from Wayne State University School of Medicine. She trained as a pediatrician with a specialty in clinical biochemical genetics.

Low-Key Anti-Smoking Ads Are More Likely to Be Remembered

For the first time, preliminary research using brain-imaging technology has shown that low-key and attention-grabbing anti-smoking public service announcements stimulate different patterns of activity in smokers' brains and that smokers are more likely to remember seeing the low-key PSAs. The study, published May 15 in the journal *NeuroImage*, was supported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Cancer Institute.

Televised PSAs are an important element of campaigns that promote smoking cessation, drug abuse prevention and other public health causes. Some PSAs take a low-key, "just the facts" approach to conveying their message, while others use attention-grabbing features such as fast pacing with frequent cuts, dramatic narration, bright colors, loud music and shocking or surprising visual images. This study found that regions of the brain associated with attention (the frontal cortex) and memory (the temporal cortex) were more active when participants were watching the low-key PSAs compared to the more dramatic attention-grabbing PSAs.

"This study highlights the feasibility of using functional magnetic resonance imaging to determine how the brain processes drug prevention messages," says NIDA director Dr. Nora Volkow. "The next step is to determine whether better memory for the low key-PSAs translates into changing attitudes and behaviors. Ultimately this could improve our strategies for communicating public health information."

Prevention Program Helps Teens Override a Gene Linked to Risky Behavior

A family-based prevention program designed to help adolescents avoid substance use and other risky behavior proved especially effective for a group of young teens with a genetic risk factor contributing toward such behavior, according to a new study by researchers at the University of Georgia. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and the National Institute on Drug Abuse supported the study, which appears in the May/June issue of *Child Development*.

For 2½ years, investigators monitored the progress of 11-year-olds enrolled in a family-centered prevention program called Strong African American Families (SAAF), and a comparison group. A DNA analysis showed some youths carried the short allele form of 5-HTTLPR. This fairly common genetic variation, found in over 40 percent of people, is known from previous studies to be associated with impulsivity, low self-control, binge drinking and substance use.

The researchers found that adolescents with this gene who participated in the SAAF program were no more likely than their counterparts without the gene to have engaged in drinking, marijuana smoking and sexual activity. Moreover, youths with the gene in the comparison group were twice as likely to have engaged in these risky behaviors as those in the prevention group.

Formaldehyde Exposure Associated with Increased Risk of Cancers

Results from an ongoing study of workers employed at plants that used or produced formaldehyde continue to show a possible link between formaldehyde exposure and death from cancers of the blood and lymphatic system, particularly myeloid leukemia. The report, by researchers at the National Cancer Institute, provides an additional 10 years of follow-up data to build on previous findings from this study. The report appeared online May 12 and in print May 20 in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*.

"The overall patterns of risk seen in this extended follow-up of industrial workers, while not definitive, are consistent with a causal association between formaldehyde exposure and cancers of the blood and lymphatic system and warrant continued concern. Further studies are needed to evaluate risks of these cancers in other formaldehyde-exposed populations and to assess possible biological mechanisms," said lead author of the report, Dr. Laura E. Beane Freeman of NCI's Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics.

Formaldehyde is widely used for industrial purposes and as a preservative and disinfectant. The International Agency for Research on Cancer classifies it as a human carcinogen, based primarily on its association with nasopharyngeal cancer. In 1995, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration estimated that approximately 2.1 million workers in the United States were exposed to formaldehyde.



For the first time, preliminary research using brain-imaging technology has shown that low-key and attention-grabbing anti-smoking public service announcements stimulate different patterns of activity in smokers' brains and that smokers are more likely to remember seeing the low-key PSAs.

letters

Dear Editor,

On Thursday, Apr. 23, my mom [NICHD's Dr. Jingrong Tang] took Wendy, Kenny and me to NIH because it was "Take Your Child to Work Day." We learned about a sickle cell disease and we voted if studies were necessary. In *Bones and Evolution*, we learned about bones of different animals. We saw a genuine fox skeleton. We had a splendid experience!

The first activity was "I want to build a rocket." We voted on whether we should start certain studies. My favorite study is that scientists are adding an iPod to toothbrushes. Some kids were afraid that the kids would outwit the toothbrush. Even though we had some stubborn competitors, we still had a thrilling time.

Another activity was called "Interview with a Mouse." A woman pretended she was Meredith, a lab mouse that has a sickle cell disease. Animals used for scientific study are protected by the government rules. A sickle cell disease is where the animals' red blood cells have varied shapes. Scientists put a gene in a virus and then sent it to the organ that makes functional red blood cells. Can you believe that a virus can deliver genes to an organ?

Bring your kids to work day was great fun. There are many interesting places in this immense institute. I hope next year the activities will be improved at NIH.

Kendy Li

NICHD's Dr. Jingrong Tang took her son Kendy Li (third from l), 10, and daughter Wendy Tang (fourth from l), 8, along with Kendy's best friend Kenny Chen (second from l), also 10, to Take Your Child to Work Day.



NIAMS director Dr. Stephen Katz (l) welcomes new members to the institute's council. They include (from l) Karen Evans, Dr. Leslie Crofford and Dr. Henry Kronenberg.

Four Appointed to NIAMS Council

Four new members were recently named to the National Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases Advisory Council.

Dr. Leslie Crofford is chief of the division of rheumatology and professor in the department of microbiology, immunology and molecular genetics at the University of Kentucky. Her research addresses rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia and scleroderma.

Karen Evans is executive director of the Will and Jada Smith Family Foundation, a private organization dedicated to the improvement of the lives of youth and their families in Baltimore, Philadelphia and Los Angeles. After being diagnosed with lupus nephritis in 2005, Evans became involved with the Lupus Foundation of America and was elected as chair of the board of directors in 2008.

Dr. Linda Griffith is director of the Biotechnology Process Engineering Center and a professor of mechanical and biological engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is recognized as an expert in the fields of tissue engineering and regeneration and in the development of biomaterials.

Dr. Henry Kronenberg is a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and chief of the endocrine unit at Massachusetts General Hospital. He leads a laboratory examining the regulation of bone and mineral metabolism and bone development.

Wednesday Afternoon Lectures

The Wednesday Afternoon Lecture Series—held on its namesake day at 3 p.m. in Masur Auditorium, Bldg. 10—features Dr. Leon Gordis, professor emeritus, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, on June 3, speaking on "Epidemiology at the Interface of Science, Policy, and Politics: Are New Directions Needed for Epidemiology Training Today?" This lecture, the 2009 Robert S. Gordon, Jr. Lecture, is presented by a scientist who has contributed significantly to research in the field of epidemiology or clinical trials.

On June 10, Dr. Susan Lindquist, member of the Whitehead Institute and professor of biology at MIT, will address, "HSF and the Balancing Act between Neurodegeneration and Cancer." Lindquist is presenting this year's Margaret Pittman Lecture, named for the first female to hold the position of laboratory chief at NIH.

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

NIH Celebrates Police Awareness Day

Celebrating the 15th annual NIH Police Awareness day with a cookout on the Bldg. 1 lawn, NIH's finest welcomed employees, visitors and their children, as well as police officers from Montgomery County, Rockville City, Amtrak, Washington, D.C., the Smithsonian Institution, Department of Homeland Security, Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning, U.S. Park Police and the NIH Fire Department.

Held each year during National Police Week, the event drew hundreds of folks who queued for burgers and franks, petted police mounts and watched the detection dogs strut their stuff.

The May 13 event featured K-9 candidates here for a 10-12 week training session taught by NIH Police Ofc. Richard Johnston. The pooches and their partners traveled from as far away as NIH's Rocky Mountain Laboratories in Hamilton, Mont.

Many of the dogs found their niche at NIH after flunking a New Jersey guide dog program.

"It's such a beautiful program," said U.S. Park Police Ofc. Jeff Bartlett, "but the dogs were washouts there. They were too playful—exactly what we look for [in police work]."

That's because K-9 training involves a lot of play. Officers use balls to teach dogs to find drugs and explosives.

National Police Week was established in 1963 to honor the service and sacrifice of law enforcement officers. The week's events honor those who died in the line of duty, including 134 officers in 2008.—**Belle Waring**



Clockwise, from top: Officers (from l) representing Rockville City Police, Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Police and NIH Police share a midday laugh. Ofc. Megan Lau's mount is Roman, a half-Shire, half thoroughbred.

NIH Police Chief Alvin Hinton (standing, l) and Ofc. Richard Johnston (r) join picnickers.

NIH Police Ofc. Jeff Youmans pitches in for KP duty.

NIH'ers appreciate NIH Police Ofc. Wallace Carter with Sasha.

Smithsonian Institution Police Ofc. A. Arias (l) with Shadow and NIH Police Ofc. Johnston, a K-9 trainer

PHOTOS: BELLE WARING

