

Acknowledgements

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THE PATHOLOGY SCOPE

WINTER 1999/2000

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Department of Pathology - Medical College of Virginia Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

May this holiday season find you and your loved ones in good health and good cheer. As we approach the end of the year and face the exhilarating possibilities of the new millennium, I am delighted to share with you some exciting initiatives that are underway in our Department.

This year, we established a Fellowship in Molecular Diagnostics that is intended to provide an individual with one year of dedicated sub-specialty training in a clinical setting. In addition, we have modified our existing Fellowship in Clinical Chemistry so that the focus is on Medical Informatics in a laboratory environment. Both programs will provide state-of-the-art training in rapidly expanding fields. We are grateful for the opportunity to expand our roster of fellowships in two areas that truly represent the future of medicine.

While we may feel proud of our accomplishments in these areas, many challenges lie ahead. The support costs of these two fellowships are in excess of \$90,000 per year. Decreasing state and federal funding, along

with the pressure of managed care, means that we are faced with the too-real prospect of cutting research and academic programs to ensure our survival.

For this reason, I am asking you to support the Pathology Development Fund. In the coming year, your monetary gift will be used exclusively to fund these two programs. Your gift will have an immediate impact on our ability to keep these fellowships viable during their critical first years. You may support these programs by writing a tax-deductible check to the MCV Foundation with attention to the "Pathology Development Fund" on the comment line.

Please feel free to contact me with questions and comments about the current and future plans of our Department. Your calls, letters, and e-mails are always welcome. Please accept my warmest wishes for a happy and productive New Year. As always, your dedication to the Department of Pathology is sincerely appreciated.

David S. Wilkinson, M.D., Ph.D., *Professor and Chairman*

School of Medicine Annual Teaching Awards

The Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine established a new series of awards this year to recognize faculty excellence in teaching, mentorship, and course design. The Department of Pathology was well represented at the award ceremony that was held in the Medical Sciences Building on October 4th. Several Pathology faculty members received recognition for their continued outstanding efforts in teaching. *Drs. Enrique Gerszten, Margaret Grimes, and Joy L. Ware* were nominees for the "School of Medicine Teaching Excellence Award". In the category of "Outstanding Course and Clerkship Teacher", *Dr. Gerszten* received a pin and a certificate as "Best Teacher" in the M I course of Pathogenesis. Also in that category, *Jonathan Ben-Ezra* was recognized as "Best Teacher" in the M III Hematology-Oncology course and *Margaret Grimes* was recognized as "Best Teacher" in the M III Respiratory course. Recognized as "Faculty with High Evaluation" were *Melissa J. Contos* for her work in the M III Gastrointestinal course and *Margaret Grimes* for her work in the M II Cardiovascular course.



Top: Drs. Ben-Ezra and Gerszten Bottom: Drs. Contos & Grimes

FACULTY NOTES:

Joanne L. Becker, M.D., resigned effective November 18th as Director of the Blood Bank to take the Director of Transfusion Medicine position at Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York. Dr. Becker was a faculty member in the Department of Pathology for five years, and we wish her well in her new position.

Jonathan Ben-Ezra, M.D., will serve a four-year term as a member of the Committee on Practice for the American Society of Hematology.

Lynne W. Elmore, Ph.D., will be the principal investigator on a Massey Cancer Center Grant in the amount of \$30,000 "To Develop a Feasible, Quantitative Molecular Diagnostic Assay for Monitoring Telomerase Activation in Preneoplastic and Neoplastic Breast, Endometrial and Ovarian Tissues". The grant is non-renewable for the period of one year. Co-PI's on this project are **Shawn Holt, Ph.D.**; **Margaret Grimes, M.D.**; and **R. Tucker Burks, M.D.**

Carleton T. Garrett, M.D, Ph.D. lectured at the New York University Department of Pathology sponsored post-graduate medical program "Surgical Pathology Update: Head to Toe". Dr. Garrett spoke in the "Ancillary Testing" section with a talk entitled "Molecular Genetics".

Margaret M. Grimes, M.D., was appointed to the Residency Review Committee for Pathology as an AMA representative. Her two-year term begins January 1, 2000.

Michael Kornstein, M.D., authored an editorial on the histologic classification of thymic epithelial neoplasms in the September issue of the American Journal of Clinical Pathology.

W. Greg Miller, Ph.D., will serve as Chair of the Area Committee on Clinical Chemistry and Toxicology for the NCCLS in 2000.

Celeste N. Powers, M.D., Ph.D., was appointed Director of Anatomic Pathology Services for the Department of Pathology on October 14, 1999.

Joy L. Ware, Ph.D., was an invited speaker at the VCU Mini-Medical School lecture series on September 29th at the Science Museum of Virginia. Her talk was titled "Of Mice and Men: Insights and Issues in Prostate Cancer Research". Dr. Ware presented a talk to the US TOO Prostate Cancer Support Group on Nov 18th. The title of that talk was "Of Mice and Men...And Functional Genomics"

David S. Wilkinson, M.D., Ph.D., and **Thomas Dilts, MBPA**, presented a national audioconference for the Clinical Laboratory Management Association entitled "Negotiating, Facilitating, and Delegating".

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF DERMATOPATHOLOGY

The Department of Pathology was well-represented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Dermatopathology meeting in LaHoya, California on November 4th through 7th. Four abstracts were accepted. Bobby Karageorge, David Rowe, Tracey Lamb, Renee Workman, and Mike Wallace presented a submission called "Expression of CD44 in epidermal carcinomas of solid organ transplant recipients versus nontransplant patients". Rajat Goel and Mike Wallace submitted two abstracts, entitled "Pseudoepitheliomatous hyperplasia secondary to cutaneous aspergillosis" and "Differential cytokeratin expression to distinguish clear cell basal cell carcinoma from renal cell carcinoma". David Rowe and Mike Wallace submitted "The Utility of

Pathology Intra-Departmental Grant Program

The Department of Pathology initiated an intra-departmental small research grant award program this year. This program is designed to stimulate scholarly activity by providing up to \$15,000 annually for projects directed by Pathology faculty. Applications for these funds are reviewed by a panel and awarded on a competitive basis. The criteria for the awards include scientific merit, feasibility, potential for leading to extra-mural funds and/or scholarly publications, and clinical relevance. Applicants are also provided with copies of the comments by reviewers to assist them with subsequent applications and activities.

Recipients of the awards for 1999/2000 are Margaret Grimes and Lynne Elmore. Dr. Grimes' project is entitled "HER-2/Neu detection in non-small cell lung cancer and pulmonary neuroendocrine tumors by FISH". Mary Barcus is the co-principal investigator in this project, and Michael Kornstein and Katherine Berezowski serve as co-investigators. Dr. Elmore's project is entitled "Role of Telomerase in endometrial cell immortalization and transformation". Collaborators with Dr. Elmore include Shawn Holt and Tucker Burks.

Grand Rounds Schedule For Spring, 2000

January 14	Richard Wenzel, MD	The Real Threat of Biological Terrorism
January 21	William Rosenblum, MD	Prion Diseases
January 28	Jay W. Ellison, MD, PhD	TBA
February 4	David Toft, PhD	The Hsp90 Chaperoning Pathway and Cell Regulatory Diseases
February 11	Celeste Powers, MD, PhD	Diagnosis of Infectious Diseases: A Cytopathologist's Perspective
February 18	Richard Hard, MD	Host versus Graft Disease
February 25	Jonathan Ben-Ezra, MD	Development of a Virtual Histologic Slide
March 3	Resident Presentations	TBA
March 10	Resident Presentations	TBA
March 17	Dana Selby, MD	Normal Histology of Infants and Children
March 24	Lisa Weymouth, PhD	TBA
March 31	John Bernard Henry, MD	Informatics/Evidence-based Pathology
April 7	Philip Hylemon, PhD	Bile Acid Signaling in Hepatocytes
April 14	Michael Kornstein, MD	TBA
April 21	William J. Frable, MD	Breast FNA - An Audit
April 28	Lynne W. Elmore, PhD	TBA
May 5	Leland Chung, PhD	TBA
May 12	Phil Anderson, PhD	TBA
May 19	Fellow Presentation	TBA
May 26	Fellow Presentation	TBA

Pathology Summer Fellowship

For more than twenty years, the Department of Pathology has offered summer fellowships to rising second year medical students. The students work with faculty for six weeks on short-term research projects. These projects have resulted in numerous publications and presentations at national and international meetings. During their fellowships, the students participate fully in departmental functions that include attending autopsies and autopsy conferences, Pathology Grand Rounds, lectures, and seminars. This gives them an inside look at academic pathology. During the summer of 1999, three students participated in the program: Nathan Tran worked with Dr. Jonathan Ben-Ezra; Christine Holstead worked with Drs. Marvin Allison and Enrique Gerszten; and Jaime Liou worked with Dr. Joanne Becker.

New Employees

We are delighted to welcome these employees to the Department of Pathology. Please make them feel at home in their new positions.

Billing;

Cerner Millennium Implementation

The implementation of the new Cerner Millennium laboratory information system was successfully accomplished on October 22nd. The smooth transition from the CHC system to the Cerner system was made possible through the hard work of a very dedicated team of individuals from across the laboratories. The system is stable and fully operational, and the transition was completed with minimal disruption to the workflow of the labs. The immediate goal of the Implementation Team is to broaden cross-training of personnel and complete the conversion of data from the CHC system to the new LIS. Functionality enhancements will be an ongoing focus of the project in the coming year. Congratulations to the Implementation Team members for their disciplined approach to a very complex assignment. Your efforts have delivered to the clinical laboratories a modern and advanced information system that will improve our ability to deliver the highest level of healthcare to our patients and clients.

PATHOLOGY LABORATORIAN COMPLETES THE WILDFLOWER TRIATHLON

Larry Lippincott, Medical Technologist in the Microbiology Laboratory, participated in the Wildflower Triathlon in San Francisco on May 1st as part of the Leukemia Society's Team in Training. In completing this bruising athletic event, Larry raised nearly \$4,000 for the Leukemia Society. The following is Larry's account of the experience.

There were more than 3,000 competitors in the Wildflower Triathlon's weekend events. Just over 300 participants were from the Leukemia Society's Team in Training. To start off, the 1.2-mile swim (which we discovered was the same distance from Alcatraz Island to San Francisco's Pier 39) was very cold. The water temperature was 55 degrees. I was so thankful that I made it to shore alive that I nearly forgot that I had two more long events ahead of me.

My senses finally came back about 10 miles into the very hilly bike course. It was at this point that the temperature started to heat up and the "hills" started to get bigger. A small hill nicknamed "heart rate hill" went from 600 feet in elevation to nearly 2,000 feet in a six-mile stretch. I guess you can see why they call it "heart rate hill". I finished the 56-mile bike ride with one more event to face. The 13.2 mile run.



I started to run at a very sluggish pace. I made it to the first water station (about 0.6 miles) and decided that my goal would be to make it to the next water station. At the fourth water break, I started to loosen up from the pounding of the bike, and I felt better. By the time I reached Mile 10, I started thinking the same discouraging thoughts that I had previous to the run. At the next mile, my legs decided to make things even harder. They started cramping up! At this point in the race, I knew it was almost over. I kept my mind on all who supported me, and I just kept going.

Once I saw the finish line and the people cheering me on, I was so exhilarated that the pain I had felt disappeared. Six hours and 27 minutes after plunging into the water, I crossed the line and hugged my wife. Being a part of the Leukemia Society's Team in Training was one of the most rewarding and satisfying things that I have ever accomplished. I know that I could not have done it without all of the support I received. With your help, I raised nearly \$4,000 for the fight against leukemia. Thank you for your contributions to stopping this deadly disease and for giving me a memory that will last a lifetime.

MOLECULAR DIAGNOSTICS LABORATORY

Six members of the Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory attended the national meeting of the Association for Molecular Pathology (AMP) in St. Louis, Missouri on November 4-7, 1999. **Carleton Garrett, Andrea Ferriera-Gonzalez, Arlene Buller, Mary Barcus, Ali Akalin** and **Mike Langley** participated in a number of plenary and subdivision sessions in the areas of infectious disease, hematopathology, solid tumors and genetic diseases.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the AMP Award for Excellence in Molecular Diagnostics Lecture, presented by Dr. Edwin Southern, developer of the Southern blot technique. The Department of Pathology had four poster presentations at the meeting. Dr. Buller was asked to present her poster at the Genetics Subdivision Abstract Platform

Presentation and was well received. Dr. Akalin was awarded one of three prizes for excellence in abstract presentation from a trainee. Congratulations to both for this national recognition.

The MDx Lab continues to expand its test menu. Genotyping of hepatitis C virus is increasingly used to tailor a patient's therapeutic regimen. Some subtypes of HCV are more effectively treated with longer therapies, while others require less treatment. Being able to identify those patients with the more susceptible subtypes allows cost savings in unnecessary drugs and limiting of the side effects they can cause. We have validated an assay that will be implemented as soon as a contract for reagents is approved. Other tests are being validated for implementation in the coming year.

SPECIAL • STUDIES • LAB

Tracey Lamb and Renee Workman recently visited the laboratory of Dr. Richard Clatch in suburban Chicago for further training on the Laser Scanning Cytometer. The instrument has applications similar to a flow cytometer, but is slide-based. It allows for multi-parameter analysis using fluorescent-labeled antibodies and image analysis data. Recently added to the Special Studies Lab, the instrument is particularly suitable for lymphocyte phenotyping studies on specimens with limited cells (e.g. fluids, fine needle aspirates, and small biopsies).

The Special Studies Laboratory now offers two FDA-approved assays for HER-2/neu in breast carcinoma: immunohistochemistry (Herceptest) and fluorescent-in-situ hybridization (FISH). The assays represent different approaches to assessing HER-2/neu in tissue sections. The HER-2 immunohistochemistry assay is incorporated within the breast carcinoma panel that also includes hormone receptors and proliferation antigen.

CLMA

The Department of Pathology's clinical laboratories are well represented on the Board of Directors of the Central Virginia Chapter of the Clinical Laboratory Management Association. Ann Harris is President-Elect, and Sue Duffee and Judy Luck are Directors. Ms. Harris is the Committee Chair for Programs and Education. Ms Duffee has been nominated to serve as Chapter Secretary. Ms. Harris and Ms. Duffee also served on the Planning Committee for the 1999 CLMA Tri-Chapter Meeting.