

# THE PATHOLOGY

WINTER 2001

SCOPE

Department of Pathology • Medical College of Virginia Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University • <http://views.vcu.edu/pat>

## VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

At the dawn of the New Year, I cannot help but reflect on the many major accomplishments of our Department during the past year. We successfully implemented the Cerner Millennium Laboratory Information System. We continued to streamline and improve our clinical laboratory operations. Our productivity as measured by the HBSI benchmarking instrument through the University Healthcare Consortium is among the top 25% of all university healthcare systems. We continue to meet or exceed budget performance expectations. We received excellent evaluations on our JCAHO and CAP surveys.

The managers in Pathology are recognized throughout our medical center for their skill and effectiveness. Our educational programs at all levels are recognized for excellence by the School of Allied Health, the School of Dentistry, and the School of Medicine. Many of our faculty and staff have been recognized individually for their outstanding performance in teaching, and they hold an increasing number of leadership positions within the curricula. Our funded research programs are enjoying the highest levels of extramural support in many years. Our faculty continues to increase its national and international reputation through service to professional organizations and scholarly publications.

Looking ahead, 2001 promises more excitement. After years of planning, three major laboratories will relocate to new and enlarged space. The Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory

will expand into 6000 square feet of newly renovated space on the second floor of the Clinical Support Center in February. This move will nearly triple the amount of space devoted to this cutting edge technology and will move VCU clearly into the forefront nationally as a provider of nucleic acid based clinical testing. In November, Surgical Pathology, Cytopathology and Transfusion Medicine will move into the new Gateway Building, nearly doubling the amount of space devoted to anatomic pathology. These moves will also place the bulk of our anatomic pathology and transfusion medicine services in much closer proximity to the patient locations that they serve. This will significantly enhance our effectiveness and efficiency.

These accomplishments have not been easy. Budget pressure is unrelenting. We continue to do more with less. Still, through the hard and effective work of faculty, managers, and staff, we have improved the output of the Department of Pathology in the areas of teaching, clinical service, and research.

I am blessed to be associated with the 400 people who make our department flourish. Please accept my sincerest gratitude for your faithful and effective service to our patients and to our department. I wish for each of you and your families the happiest New Year ever.

**By David S. Wilkinson, MD, PhD**  
*Professor and Chairman*

## PATHOLOGY HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTEES

Each year, the Department of Pathology recognizes those M2 students scoring in the top ten percent on the Pathogenesis course by inducting them into the Pathology Honor Society, a national honorary association sponsored by the Association of Pathology Chairs. This year's student honorees, seated, from left: **David Pastel, Erika Woodson, Elisabeth Ashley, Katherine Shew, Jon Moussally.** Standing, from left: **Dr. Wilkinson, Kathleen Powis, Nira Colyn, Todd Bruno, Eric Lyders, Gaelyn Eaton, Vartan Tashjian, Hugh Colvin, Elizabeth Zarkin, Casey Gray, Dr. Gerszten, Julia Graves.** Not pictured: **Jeremy Moore, Devi Chakravorty.**



## FACULTY NOTES

After serving for more than twenty years as Chairman of the Division of Surgical and Cytopathology and Medical Director of the Surgical Pathology Service, **Dr. William "Jack" Frable** has decided to relinquish these administrative responsibilities. He will remain a full-time Professor of Pathology with clinical and teaching responsibilities in surgical pathology and cytopathology. Dr. Frable will continue to occupy the Saul Kay Endowed Chair in Diagnostic Pathology. The Department of Pathology has benefited from Dr. Frable's many years of service, and we are pleased that he has given us the opportunity to manage the transition to new leadership while he is still a full-time member of our faculty.

Effective January 1, 2001, **Margaret M. Grimes, MD**, will take over as Medical Director of the Surgical Pathology Service, which includes Accessioning, Gross Room, Core (Histology) Lab, Transcription, and the Specimen Archives.

**Celeste N. Powers, MD, PhD**, will continue in her role as the Medical Director of Anatomic Pathology Services, where she has served since October, 1999.

**Michael J. Kornstein, MD**, is leaving his position as Professor of Pathology and Director of the Special Studies Laboratory on January 18th, 2001. An active member of the VCU/MCV faculty for over 14 years, Dr. Kornstein has authored articles, chapters, and a book in the areas of mediastinal pathology, hematopathology, and immunohistochemistry. Dr. Kornstein will join Clinical Laboratory Consultants in Richmond. We wish him the very best in his new endeavor.

**Kristin Atkins, MD**, has accepted a full-time faculty position at the academic rank of Assistant Professor in the Division of Surgical and Cytopathology. She is currently a cytopathology fellow here in the Department of Pathology. Her new position will commence on July 1, 2001 upon the completion of her fellowship program.

**John B. Cousar, Jr., MD**, joined our faculty on January 3rd, 2001 at the academic rank of Clinical Professor in the Division of Clinical Pathology. Dr. Cousar earned an international reputation at Vanderbilt University in the field of Hematopathology, and we are delighted to benefit from his clinical and teaching experience.

Several faculty members of the department played key roles at the ASCP/CAP Annual Meeting in San Diego in October. **Drs. William Frable** (Non-Gynecologic Cytopathology), **Richard McPherson** (Wellness Testing and Cardiac Risk Assessment, Testing for Viral Hepatitis), **Celeste Powers** (Cases in Fine Needle Aspiration of the Thyroid), **Roger Riley** (Reticulocytes, Applications of Digital Photography), and **Susan Roseff** (Leukoreduction, Cases in Transfusion Medicine) served as moderators or speakers. Cytotechnologist **Leigh Ann Cahill** and Dr. Powers provided a workshop in respiratory cytopathology.

## MOLECULAR DIAGNOSTICS EXPANSION

Work is progressing at a rapid pace in the new Molecular Diagnostics clinical laboratory on the second floor of the Clinical Support Center. With six thousand square feet of space, this lab will be the largest medical center based molecular testing facility in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Under the leadership of Carleton T. Garrett, Andrea Ferreira-Gonzalez and Mike Langley, the volume of testing in Molecular Diagnostics has steadily increased during the past five years. Additional equipment and personnel have gradually been added by Molecular Diagnostics to handle increased volumes in HIV genotyping, quantitative HIV, and hepatitis C virus. This growth created a real need for improved and enlarged space. The project cost of \$1.7 million includes customized laboratory design by Baskervill and Sons, with Karen Mortland serving as the architectural design consultant. Bovis General Contractors performed the actual construction, with on-site supervision provided by construction managers G. Wayne Harrel, Bryan Myslevy and Fred Adams. Tom Young and Will Green of MCV Hospitals have provided invaluable oversight of this important project. The scheduled move-in date is mid-February, 2001, with a formal ribbon cutting and open house to be held in late March.

## RESEARCH

Shawn E. Holt, PhD, Assistant Professor of Pathology and Human Genetics, was recently awarded a two-year, \$100,000 research grant from the Mary Kay Ash Charitable Foundation. The grant is titled "Therapeutic Strategies for the Prevention and Treatment of Breast Cancer Using Telomerase". Dr. Holt described the objectives of this research project: "Cancer has been characterized as a disease of aging. In the past decade, approximately 1.5 million women were diagnosed with breast cancer, and yet, the molecular basis for the age-associated increase in breast cancer incidence remains poorly understood. A subset of breast cells, mammary epithelial (HME) cells, have an abnormally high frequency of tumor formation and immortalize more easily than their surrounding mammary stromal (HMS) cells. The enzyme telomerase, absent in most normal cells, is a widespread marker for human malignancy and is associated with 90% of human breast tumors. We have found that expression of telomerase in normal cells prevents cellular aging without changes typically associated with cancer, and the cells divide indefinitely. However, when we try to progress these cells to an immortal or tumor-like state, they appear to be resistant to transformation, suggesting that telomerase may provide a protective mechanism against progression to a cancer-like state. Our goals are to attempt to use telomerase as a target for prevention and/or treatment of breast cancer. First, we will attempt to progress normal mammary cells toward immortality in the presence of telomerase in order to determine if telomerase indeed has tumor suppressive function. Second, since telomerase is associated with cancer and appears required for cancer cell growth, we will use telomerase as a novel target for cancer therapy, with the hope of increasing specificity while reducing side-effects. If we can inhibit telomerase in breast cancer cells, we can essentially turn off cell division and ultimately cure the cancer."



The Department recently added several significant pieces of research equipment. A **MALDI mass spectrometer** will be used to provide high-throughput analysis of proteins. In addition, an **automated sample preparation instrument** was purchased to enzymatically digest samples and spot them onto the MALDI plates. A **tissue arrayer** allows the "spotting" of multiple tissue fragments on a single glass slide so reagents can be applied to the slide and measurements can be made on the multiple tissue fragments. Both nucleic acids and proteins can be measured. A **capillary electrophoresis instrument** is used for the very sensitive determination of nucleic acid sequences. All four instruments are critical for our programs in genomics (the science of identifying genes and gene functions) and proteomics (the science of identifying proteins and protein functions).

### Web Page Wins Honorable Mention

The newly redesigned Pathology web page won recognition with an "Honorable Mention for Best Departmental Web Page" at the Pathology Informatics Conference, sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in October, 2000. Katherine Stevenson, MEd, Educational Practitioner, presented her electronic poster "Using the New to Revitalize and Capitalize on the Best of the Old".

### New Employees

Please welcome the following new employees to the Department of Pathology: John Bradley, Molecular Diagnostics; Lorrelle Cannon, Chemistry; Chiroya Cephas, Specimen Processing; Cecelia Cole, Phlebotomy; Bryan Daniels, Blood Bank; Linda Davis, Neuropathology; Maribeth Dottere, Hemophilia Program; Sandra Jones Elam, Billing; Valeria Mas, Molecular Diagnostics; Sonya McClure, Phlebotomy; Leona Millings, Hematology; Thuy Trinh Ngo, Hematology; Erica Nixon, Specimen Processing; Yuk Kuen Oh, Hematology; Trah Phah, Chemistry; Runna Sun, Chemistry; Ramona Underwood, Microbiology; Keoagile Wadinku, Chemistry; Barbara Young, Blood Bank.



**JOHN THOMAS**

**MCVH&P EMPLOYEE  
OF THE MONTH**

John Thomas was recognized as the MCV Hospitals and Physicians Employee of the Month for November, 2000. Mr. Thomas has been an employee of MCV Hospitals since May 1, 1960. He is responsible for assisting the pathologists with performing autopsies. In doing so, he interacts closely with other departments in the hospital such as Pastoral Care and Decedent Affairs, Transportation and Hospital Security. In addition to his clinical responsibilities, Mr. Thomas also has a gift for teaching. He instructs and provides direction to all technical personnel and residents involved with the autopsy service. He has presented many lectures and talks at local and national histology meetings on the subject of autopsies. In reference to his dedication, Judy Luck, Manager of Anatomic Pathology Laboratories, said "Making Caring Visible is most definitely apparent in Mr. Thomas. John takes his position seriously and always demonstrates the utmost respect for the patient and family. In all the years that I have known John, I have never seen him demonstrate any work ethics other than exemplary with respect and dedication to his job."



**ROBERT MICHEL VISITS PATHOLOGY LABS**

Robert Michel, host of the War College on Lab and Pathology Management and Editor in Chief of The Dark Report, visited with faculty, directors, managers and staff of the Department of Pathology in October. His visit followed the CLMA Fall Educational Conference that was held in Richmond. Mr. Michel spent valuable time with Dr. McPherson, Tom Dilts, and Ann Harris discussing our strategic planning and quality improvement efforts. He also reviewed the relocation plans for the Anatomic Pathology, Transfusion Medicine, and Molecular Diagnostics laboratories. Mr. Michel presented a 90-minute interactive session to the faculty and staff. During his presentation, Mr. Michel identified industry macro and micro trends. He predicts that information technology will change the way we do business and emphasized that there will be increasing demand by customers and patients for value-added reporting. Mr. Michel cited ISO 9000 as the driving force that uses new management techniques to prevent errors and exceed customer expectations. The overall theme suggested that the healthcare market gives little value to a basic lab result, but places a much higher value on converting the raw data into useful clinical outcomes information. Mr. Michel emphasized the importance of developing an on-line presence for ordering and reporting lab results. The Department of Pathology should rest assured that the execution of our strategic plan continues to position our laboratories at the forefront of laboratory medicine.



**ANN TIDWEL  
PATHOLOGY  
HUG OF THE YEAR**

At the annual Employee Holiday Party each year, the Department of Pathology recognizes one outstanding employee with the HUG of the Year award. This year's recipient is Ann Tidwell, a medical technologist in the Hematology laboratory. Ms. Tidwell, a fifteen-year employee, always goes beyond the call of duty in providing outstanding customer service. In the words of Jean Willoughby, Hematology Manager, "When you need someone, Ann is there. She is extremely thoughtful and considerate of others, patients and employees alike." She took it upon herself to step in and assist in the Coagulation area when there was an urgent need for staff support. In fact, Ann is eager to find new areas in the lab where she may use her outstanding skill and experience. The Department of Pathology and MCV Hospitals are fortunate to have Ann Tidwell as an employee and associate, and we thank her for her continued commitment to excellence.

## STONY POINT LAB

**S**tony Point Lab is growing. Carolyn Johnson was promoted to Senior Laboratory Technician. Lavondra Robinson has joined the staff as a laboratory technician. Basic metabolic panels and magnesiums are now available STAT on site. The Vitros 250 went live on December 4th. This instrument is interfaced with the Cerner LIS, providing quicker turnaround times to better serve all Stony Point patients. A special thank you to Sherri Canavos, Terri Mahon, and all others in the Main Chemistry lab who assisted in the setup, comparison studies, and training of staff for this instrument. It was truly a Pathology team project. Kathy Binns, medical technologist at Stony Point, will be attending the advanced training for the Vitros 250 in January in New York.

The Massey Cancer Center at Stony Point opened in October. Radiation Therapy and the Pharmacy are located on the first floor and Hematology/Oncology is located on the second floor. The lab has a phlebotomy drawing room that is staffed by phlebotomists Carolyn Johnson, Annette Brandon, and Lavondra Robinson on a rotating basis. Samples are brought to the lab for STAT testing. All results print in areas served via Cerner. Patients needing transfusion may also have this done at Stony Point. Samples are collected and sent by courier to the Blood Bank for testing. Units to be transfused are sent to Stony Point by courier. The lab now has 2 "lab only" parking places located near the handicapped area. These designated spaces have a 15 minute time limit, so the lab staff must provide quick service. This is a convenience for patients needing chemotherapy. This decreases the patient waiting time and enhances the quality of service provided.

## Art in the Hospital

*Barbara Hobson, Specimen Processing Supervisor in Clinical Pathology, has a painting on display in the lobby of the main hospital as part of the Art in the Hospital program. The popularity of her past works prompted MCV Hospitals to request a ten painting exhibit in June of 2001. Ms. Hobson, a 25-year employee of the Department of Pathology, is a lifelong artist. Using an acrylic medium, the focus of her artwork is mainly African-American themes. She has been successful in marketing her work at art festivals, craft shows, and church bazaars, and her work has been displayed at the Valentine Museum.*

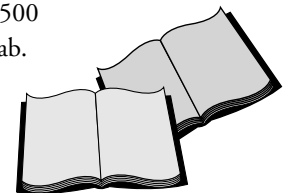


*Barbara Hobson and her painting "Resting"*

## Workbooks

### *for Pediatric Patients*

During the summer, Florine Howell, Lab Specialist in the Randolph Minor Pediatrics Lab, began purchasing preschool workbooks with her own funds to give to children who came in to the lab for preschool physicals. The children were enthusiastic about completing the assignments, and they would very often bring the finished workbooks back during follow-up visits. Carol Rhodes, Laboratory Supervisor for Outpatient Hematology, anticipated an increase in this patient population and looked for donors to help with this worthwhile project. The MCVH Volunteer Office put her in touch with the Altrusa Society, an international business and professional women's organization that has been in Richmond for over 100 years. Literacy is one of the Altrusa Society's ongoing interests, and on November 4th they donated 500 workbooks to the Randolph Minor lab. Their generosity will benefit many children in the Richmond area.



## Grand Rounds

Please check the Pathology web page ([views.vcu.edu/pat](http://views.vcu.edu/pat)) for the Spring 2001 Pathology Grand Rounds schedule and speakers.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Your submissions are encouraged.**

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