



CIRWH NEWS FLASH

Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health

SUMMER 2004

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL BRANCH

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2

From the Director's Desk



First, I wish to thank Mrs. Harris L. (Peaches) Kempner for a superb job in planning the luncheon for this year's National Women's Health

Week. She organized a planning committee who suggested guests to invite, and followed up to ensure that we had a great turnout. Of course, we owe a big thanks to the busy people on this wonderful committee. More than 200 attended!

The dynamic speaker, Dr. Jennifer Hays, director of the Women's Health Center at Baylor College of Medicine, reiterated the lessons from the Women's Health Initiative study on postmenopausal women, hormones and health. She explained why investigators ended the study early—problems these hormones were designed to curb (heart disease, stroke and breast cancer) did not improve with hormonal treatment, and sometimes appeared to lead to an *increase* in their incidence.

The William Rupert Kerr, M.D., Lecture in Obstetrics & Gynecology, held the next day, featured Dr. Dan German Blazer of Duke University School of Medicine. He spoke on "Dementia and the Older Woman." We thank Drs. Garland D. Anderson, chairman of obstetrics and gynecology, and John C. Jennings, professor, ob/gyn, for inviting their medical school colleague to Galveston.

Continued on Page 4

CROSS-CAMPUS COLLABORATIONS

Center researchers reach out

In mid-June, three center fellows submitted a grant application to the National Institutes of Health Dietary Supplement Research Center's: Botanicals. Titled "Dietary estrogen mechanisms as hormone therapy," the investigation is looking at how plant estrogens (soy, for example) act in place of hormone replacement therapy in light of a recent Women's Health Initiative study that recommended physicians curtail its prescription to menopausal women.

At a biomedical research institution, such as UTMB, faculty members routinely submit grant applications. For the center, the news about this one is that it is the first to result from a collaboration that CIRWH initiated, and includes fellows from three different departments: Drs. Cheryl Watson, principal investigator and professor, human biological chemistry & genetics; D. Mark Estes, professor, Randall Goldblum, professor, and Terumi Midoro-Horiuti, assistant professor, all three in pediatrics; and Melvyn S. Soloff, professor, obstetrics & gynecology.



Dr. D. Mark Estes, right, and members of his virology lab in the Sealy Center for Vaccine Development, from left, Drs. Ed Curran, and Barbara Judy and K. Chad Lambert.

Because a key CIRWH goal from the beginning has been to encourage this kind of interdisciplinary collaboration across campus, CIRWH awarded the group a seed grant to develop pilot data for their application. They expect to learn the outcome early in 2005.

Meanwhile, their effort prompts the question: Are other center fellows involved in interdisciplinary research collaborations we don't know about? Response from a quick email survey shows the answer is 'yes.'

For example, Dr. Terry McNearney, associate professor of neuroscience and cell biology, collaborates on two different projects with faculty from

Continued on Page 2

Women's health researchers reach out to colleagues

Continued from Page 1



Dr. Cheryl Watson

her department, and two divisions of the Department of Internal Medicine— Drs. Karin Westlund High, Giulio Tagliatela, Sue Carlton, Bruce Baethge, Niti Goel and

Jiande Chen.

In the first project, which is pre-clinical, McNearney and her colleagues study the role of neurotransmitters in the initiation and persistence of arthritis and are developing novel strategies to treat it. In the other project, which is clinical, they look at how acupressure, electro-neural stimulation and other alternative therapies can manipulate gastric rhythm disturbances to alleviate gastroparesis and intestinal dysmotility in patients with systemic sclerosis. This research will also benefit patients with diabetic gastroparesis and functional dyspepsia.

Others participating in the phytoestrogen grant application

Family Medicine: **Dr. Victor Sierpina**

Geriatrics: **Dr. Jean Freeman**

Human Biological Chemistry & Genetics: **Drs. Nataliya Bulayeva,**

Dragoslava Zivadinovic

Obstetrics & Gynecology: **Drs. Abbey Berenson, Jennifer (Yowjiun) Jeng**

Pediatric Child Health Research Center: **Dr. Victor Reyes**

Pediatrics: **Drs. Edward M. Curran, Barbara Judy, Lawrence R. Stanberry**

Pharmacology: **Drs. Kathryn Cunningham, Mary L. Thomas**

Dr. Ed Curran, assistant professor in pediatrics and a scientist in Estes' lab, said they initiated a collaboration with Dr. Bogdan Nowicki, professor of obstetrics and gynecology, not long after moving to UTMB from Missouri a year ago. The interdisciplinary investigation on the effect of hormonal estrogen stimulation on urinary tract infection (UTI), came about after they read one of Nowicki's papers in researching another project. Once the lab was situated at UTMB, they hooked up. As researchers in women's health issues, they all are CIRWH fellows.

Curran pointed out they also have complementary interests. "Bogdan has expertise in urinary tract infection and progesterone; our expertise is estrogen," Curran said. "He's familiar with endocrine hormones; we know about

hormonal regulation of the immune system. He studied the regulation of the environment that affects these things; we had evidence that estrogen treatment of mice may alter disease severity in some cases. He was just a natural collaborator."

Nowicki said their goal is to "develop new approaches for the prevention of recurrent UTIs." A grant application to the NIH is pending, Nowicki added.

The Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health, he said, "Creates a better environment to exchange ideas, and the regular meetings help communicate our study or interact with each other." Curran added that he appreciates "having people who are members of the center as collaborators and advisers."

Churches collaborate to battle obesity

A campus-community collaboration, supported by a grant from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, was established by Dr. Martha Hargraves, associate professor, obstetrics and gynecology, to address obesity and weight problems.

"Using the historical influence of the African-American church," says the abstract for the project, the JesusFit program will design, implement and evaluate a "faith-based nutrition and physical activity education program among African-American women and their families in Galveston."

Collaborators include four Galveston churches, whose pastors

are the Reverends Kerry Tillmon, West Point Baptist Church and president of the Baptist Minister's Association of Galveston County; W.L. Brown, Shiloh AME Church; Charles Wheat, St. Luke Full Gospel Church; and A.S. Johnson, Jerusalem Baptist Church.

The program also has coordinators in each church and facilitators who provide nutrition education, supervise an exercise regimen, and are helping write a community cookbook.

JesusFit's success will be measured by self-reported health status and health behaviors at the beginning and end and quantitative comparisons of biologic markers.

Other CIRWH fellows

responded to the survey, saying they have interdisciplinary scientific collaborations.

They are:

Ayman Al-Hendy, associate professor, the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology

Stella Nowicki, associate professor, the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology

Chandra Yallampalli, professor, the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology

Ellen More, professor, Institute for the Medical Humanities

Honors and awards

Dr. Constance D. Baldwin, professor, Department of Pediatrics, assumed the position of Chair of the Education Committee of the Ambulatory Pediatric Association in May. This is a nationally elected position on the APA Board. The association also debuted the APA Educational Guidelines web site, a project of the committee, at the national pediatric meetings in May.

Invited presentations

Dr. Mahmoud S. Ahmed, professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, was recently an invited speaker at three major events. In Crystal City, Va., in May, he presented a workshop co-sponsored by the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists and the Food and Drug Administration.

In April, The Hungarian Academy of Science, Biological Research Center and the University of Szeged, in Szeged, Hungary, invited Ahmed to present "Transplacental transfer and metabolism of methadone and Buprenorphine." In April he also presented "Human placenta as a model system for in vitro and ex-vivo investigations" in Moscow at the Russian Academy of Science, Shemyakin, and at Ouchinnikov Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry.

Dr. Caroline W. Stegink Jansen, assistant professor of physical therapy in the School of Allied Health Sciences, was one of four featured speakers at the 17th annual meeting of the Hong Kong Society for Surgery of the Hand in mid-May in Hong Kong.

Dr. Gordon Klein, professor, pediatric gastroenterology, presented a seminar for the Department of Medicine, University of Cambridge, England, in March entitled: "Burns—bad to the bone."

Dr. Terri McNearney, associate professor, Department of Anatomy and Neurosciences, was invited to present on "Significance of glutamate receptors in arthritis" at the Joint American and Canadian Pain Association meeting in Vancouver, Canada, in May.

Dr. Harold H. Sandstead, professor, Division of Human Nutrition,

Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health, was organizer and chairman of and speaker at the History of Nutrition Symposium, titled: "History of the Interdepartmental Committee for Nutrition and National Defense." The symposium was part of the American Society for Nutrition Sciences at Experimental Biology 2004, in Washington, D.C., in April. His introductory talk was "Early history of the ICNND." Sandstead also was plenary speaker at the 2004 Zinc Signals meeting in Aarhus, Denmark, June 19-23.

Dr. Cheryl Watson, professor, Department of Human Biological Chemistry & Genetics, was a symposium speaker and was on the organizing committee for the 2004 Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology Summer Conference July 31–August 5, in Tuscon, Ariz. Her presentation was "Steroid hormone receptors: integration of plasma membrane- and nuclear-initiated signaling in hormone action." She also was on the Department of Defense Program in Breast Cancer Research Endocrinology study section in July 2004.

Dr. Karin Westlund High, professor, Department of Neuroscience and Cell Biology, was workshop organizer and speaker at the Joint American and Canadian Pain Association meeting in Vancouver, Canada, May 9. Her topic was "Visceral and nociceptive sensory information processing in the central nervous system: human and rat fMRI, electrophysiology, and tract tracing."

New Grants

Mahmoud Ahmed. Obstetrics & Gynecology. Development of Medications for the Pregnant Opiate Addict. National Institute on Drug Abuse. Renewed 07/01/05 through 06/30/10.

Gary D. Hankins. Obstetrics & Gynecology. Obstetric-Fetal Pharmacology Research Units Network. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Karin N. Westlund High. Neuroscience and Cell Biology. Neurogenic amplification of pancreatitis pain. National Institute of Neurological

Disease and Stroke. Renewed 04/01/04 through 03/31/09, \$1,855,237/5 yrs.

Terumi Midoro-Horiuti. Pediatrics. Clinical Scientist Development Award. Structural biology of cedar pollen allergy. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. \$474,248/4 years.

Stacy L. Sell. Pharmacology & Toxicology. Young Investigator Award—Individual. Estrogen modulation of the response to SSRIs in female rats. National Association for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression.

Recent Publications

Anderson, E. T. & Mercer, Z.B. (2004). Impact of community health content on nurse practitioner practice: A comparison of classroom and web-based teaching. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 25(4), 171-175.

N. N. Bulayeva, B. Gametchu, and **C. S. Watson**. Quantitative measurement of estrogen-induced ERK 1 and 2 activation via multiple membrane-initiated signaling pathways. *Steroids* 69 (3):181-192, 2004.

Hatashita, H. & **Anderson, E. T.** (2004). Public health nurses make a difference: A Japanese rural village benefits. *Journal of Community Health Nursing*, 21(2), 101-110. [Hatashita was a post-doctoral fellow at UTMB from 2001 to 2003.]

Lambert KC, **Curran EM**, **Judy BM**, **Lubahn DB** and **Estes DM**. Estrogen receptor- α deficiency promotes increased TNF- α secretion from murine macrophages. *Journal of Leukocyte Biology* 75: 1166-1172, 2004

Xu X, Murdoch FE, **Curran EM**, **Welshons WV**, and **Fritsch MK**. Transcription factor accessibility and histone acetylation of the progesterone receptor gene differs between parental MCF-7 cells and a subline that has lost progesterone receptor expression. *Gene* 328:143-151, 2004.

Young S, **Al-Hendy A**, **Copland J**. Potential non-hormonal therapeutics for medical treatment of leiomyomas. In *Uterine leiomyoma: Options and Choices*; Editor Bruce R. Carr, Seminars in Reproductive Medicine, 2004, 22(2):121-130.


From the Director's Desk

Continued from Page 1

At our second NWHW poster session, 45 novice and veteran women's health scientists presented nearly 50 exhibits detailing their work. Thank you to everyone who showed their research findings and to the many judges who scored the entries. Three investigators, Drs. Michelle Benoit, Egle Bytautiene and Dragaslova Zivadinovic, won \$250 awards for excellence in clinical, translational and basic science research, respectively.

While NWHW 2004 remains vivid in our memories, Mrs. Walter (Olivia) Meyer, Peaches' successor, has already begun planning for next year. So mark your calendars for the week of May 7-14, 2005, and watch for details.

Yours in good health,


Abbey B. Berenson, M.D.

CIRWH Calendar

CIRWH Seminars ♦ 12 noon-1 p.m. in 2.312 Children's Hospital

October

October 1, Abbey Berenson, M.D., UTMB, Status Report on the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health

November

November 5, Karin Gwyn, M.D., UT MD Anderson, breast cancer research (title tba)

December

December 3, Harold Sandstead, M.D., UTMB, "How zinc and iron affect neuropsychological function in young women and relation of iron status to zinc status"

January

January 7, Drs. Mabel E. Caban, Yow-Jiun Jeng and Terumi Midoro-Horiuti, UTMB, 2003 CIRWH summer seed grant recipients

February

February 4, Jennifer Hays, Ph.D., Baylor College of Medicine, hormones and dementia (title tba)

March

March 4, William W. Wong, Ph.D., F.A.C.N., Baylor College of Medicine, "Soy isoflavones: potential benefits against osteoporosis and hypertension"

April

April 1, to be determined

May

May 6, Drs. Monica Longo and Cheryl Watson, 2004 CIRWH winter seed grant recipients

Contact us:
Email: jobremere@utmb.edu
Phone: Joanna Bremer, editor
(409) 747-4978
Mail: CIRWH
The University of Texas
Medical Branch
301 University Boulevard
Galveston, Texas 77555-0587
Web site: www.utmb.edu/cirwh

Director of CIRWH
Abbey B. Berenson, M.D.
Associate Director
Cheryl S. Watson, Ph.D.
Assistant Director
Constance D. Baldwin, Ph.D.
Administrator
Joanna Bremer

The CIRWH News Flash is published quarterly by the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston.

The University of Texas Medical Branch

UTMB
Center for Interdisciplinary Research
in Women's Health

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Galveston, Texas
Permit No. 5