



CIRWH NEWS FLASH

Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health

FALL 2004

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL BRANCH

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From the Director's Desk



Each of the last two summers, the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health has awarded prizes to students in UTMB's Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP) who focused on women's health research.

SURP introduces enthusiastic college undergraduates from throughout the nation to UTMB and the careers available in biomedical sciences. "Part of our goal is to recruit these students to UTMB schools," said Dr. Lisa Gould, assistant professor in the Department of Surgery and one of SURP's co-directors.

Last August's CIRWH award went to Lilian Perez from Wellesley College. Her mentor was Dr. Chandrasekhar Yallampalli, professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology. The 2003 CIRWH award recipient was Kyriah Butler, whose mentor was Dr. Gayle Weaver, associate professor, Division of Rehabilitation Sciences in the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health.

I encourage other center fellows to participate as mentors in this successful program, which attracts 300 to 400 applicants with science backgrounds for the 40 coveted spots.

The trend recently has been for more female than male students to apply, according to Dr. Golda Leonard, a veteran director of the

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2004 summer survey shows center successes in two years

To assess the performance of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Women's Health and its value to UTMB fellows, the center sent surveys electronically in June to 85 members. Of those, 33 surveys (38 percent) were returned, although not everyone responded to every question.

An analysis of the responses shows that the center is doing a pretty good job of serving its members. Here is what the surveys said and how the CIRWH executive committee is changing things to address needs the survey identified. On the scoring, 1 represents very low, 3 equals average or good, and 5 is very high.

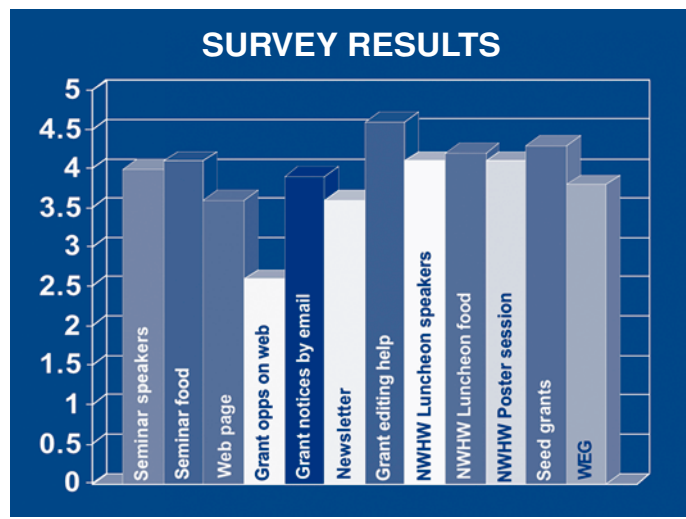
Seminar series: The monthly seminar series rated good marks, with an average score of 4 for the speakers and 4.1 for the food. The presenters ranged from home-grown experts on such topics as diabetes mellitus screening and the effects of drugs on reproduction, to Houston scientists who are investigating breast cancer from several different perspectives.

Seminar menus featured a variety of casseroles accompanied by salad,

bread and lemon squares or cookies. Because several who attend regularly are vegetarians, and many always watch their caloric intake, caterer Cathy Conlon-Townsend, of Galveston Connections, will make a more concerted effort to serve lower-calorie entrees. But she still plans to provide lemon squares or cookies.

Web page: Of the 32 responses regarding the CIRWH web page, more than one-third (12) have not viewed it. Those who have seen or used the page rated it highly, with 15 giving it scores of 4 or higher. The page has been redesigned slightly to give more prominence to center activities and researchers. Readers from the general community should find it easier to identify and locate

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From the Director's Desk

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program. Texas students are more likely to come to UTMB, but the first round of acceptances is to students from all over the country.

For 10 weeks, students attend bi-weekly seminars and occasional social events, and may participate in a GRE preparatory class. The program culminates in a poster presentation where awards are presented based on presentation and scientific merit, as determined by graduate student judges. According to Lisa, more than 50 percent of SURP participants go on to medical or graduate school, many of them here.

UTMB mentors direct the research experience, in either clinical or basic science. They should design projects the students can do without assistance, or at least have substantial responsibility for during their ten weeks in the lab. According to Lisa, there are no minimum requirements for mentorship, except enthusiasm for assisting an undergraduate student and the time to provide appropriate scientific guidance.

To be a mentor, please contact Lisa or the other co-directors, Drs. Bernd U. Budelmann, professor, Marine Biomedical Institute; and Leonard, associate professor in the Department of Otolaryngology, explaining your availability and research interests. Forms requesting participation will be emailed to the faculty in January or February.

Cost to each lab is only what the project costs. Department heads receive requests for sponsorship, but that is not a condition of becoming a mentor.

Yours in good health,



Abbey B. Berenson, M.D.



Lillian Perez, of Wellesley College, receives her Award for Excellence in Research in Women's Health at the conclusion of the Summer Undergraduate Research Program from Dr. Lisa Gould, one of the SURP co-directors.

2004 survey shows center successes

Continued

content of interest to them, such as clinical trials and headlines about women's health research.

Fewer than one-third of center fellows, however, had ever looked at the grant opportunities posted to the web site. That page has been eliminated.

Grant opportunities by email: More popular than the web grant listings are the email notices of grant opportunities. Only four of the responses rated the emails low on the helpful scale. However, the center Board of Directors was concerned about the loss of the web as an archive for past notices.

As a result, a new CIRWH mailbox appears among the public folders in the global email directory. It houses read-only copies of all grant notices sent to center fellows. Thus, someone looking for an announcement they might have received from the center may search the files.

Newsletter: The *CIRWH News Flash*, while not read by as many as the center would hope (75 percent of survey respondents), it was rated well among the readers, with an average score of 3.6 and only one ranking below 3. As center officials learn of more publications by our fellows, more stories about them and their work are likely to follow.

NWHW luncheon and poster session:

About half the respondents attended National Women's Health Week activities, the kickoff luncheon and/or the poster session. They rated the luncheon speakers and food high—4.1 and 4.2 respectively—and the poster session equally high, 4.1. Plans are moving forward for activities for 2005. Watch the web site and the newsletter for more details.

Seed grants: The highest ratings went to the CIRWH seed grant program, it scored an average of 4.3. Since its inception in 2002, the center has awarded eight grants to junior faculty and a research interest group with a novel idea. Support goes to promising basic, clinical, or translational research relevant to the general area of women's health and likely to lead to significant external grant funding. These pilot grants have led to several NIH or other federal funding applications, most of which are still pending.

Writing Effectiveness Group: The Writing Effectiveness Group, which provides group seminars and individual coaching for selected junior faculty and postdoctoral fellows writing grants and manuscripts, received a high (average 3.8) score from the eight respondents. Some 15 fellows have participated in the program in its two years of existence.

Honors and Awards

Dr. Ruth Levine, professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, received two UTMB teaching awards. The first, the “Women in Medicine Preclinical Award,” was presented in August by the medical student members of the American Medical Woman’s Assoc. Faculty committee also selected her for the Class of 1947 Excellence in Education Award, which was presented in October at the Founder’s Day Faculty Awards Luncheon.

Drs. Lee-Jane Lu, professor, Department of Preventive Medicine & Community Health, Division of Human Nutrition, and **Cheryl S. Watson**, professor, Department of Human Biological Chemistry & Genetics, were honored in October by D’Feet Breast Cancer for their contributions to breast cancer research.

At the conclusion of the Summer Undergraduate Research Program in August, **Lilian G. Perez**, whose co-authors were **Drs. Madhu Chauhan** and **Chandrasekhar Yallampalli** in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, received the CIRWH award for research in women’s health. Her topic was “*Expression of Intermedin in Rat Placenta.*” Perez is from Wellesley College, Wellesley, Mass.

Invited presentations

Dr. Gordon Klein, professor, pediatric gastroenterology, was invited to present a lecture on “The Effects of Acute Illness on Bone Physiology” for the pediatric mini symposium at the 26th Annual Meeting of the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research in Seattle in early October.

Dr. Cheryl Watson recently gave a lecture on how environmental estrogens signal like estrogens at the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology Summer Conference in Tucson, Ariz. The meeting was entitled “Steroid Hormone Receptors: Integration of Plasma Membrane- and Nuclear-Initiated Signaling in Hormone Action.” Watson gave a similar presentation at the University of Louisville School of Medicine Department of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry in May, and



Christine Anderson, volunteer coordinator for D’Feet Breast Cancer, left, and Dolly Warren, D’Feet vice president for fundraising & special events, second from right, present awards to Dr. Lee-Jane Lu, second from left, and Dr. Cheryl S. Watson, right.

at Loyola University Medical Center, Chicago, Department of Cell Biology, Neurobiology and Anatomy in September.

New Grants

Cunningham, Kathryn. Pharmacology. Neuropsychopharmacology MDMA–Monoaminergic Mechanisms. *National Institute on Drug Abuse R01 Supplement.* \$54,546.00/1 yr.

Estes, D. M. Sealy Center for Vaccine Development. In vitro and Animal Models for Emerging Diseases and Biodefense (part E–Safety/Toxicology and Immunogenicity Testing for Vaccines). *National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases.* \$5,385,075.01.

Hannigan, Edward V. Ob/Gyn. A Pilot Study of Pevlon Cervical Cancer Screen. *Private Concepts, Inc.*

Munn, Mary B. Ob/Gyn. Multi-center Network of Maternal-Fetal Medicine Units: Randomized Clinical Trial of the Beneficial Effects of Antenatal Magnesium Sulfate– BEAM Study. *University of Alabama NICHD Subcontract.* \$87,466.00/1 yr.

Ostir, Glenn. Sealy Center on Aging. Stroke Recovery in Underserved Populations. *National Institute on Aging R01.* \$1,083,425.00/5 yrs.

Payne, Deborah A. Pathology. Collection of Unlinked Vaginal/Rectal Swab Specimens from Intrapartum and Women at 35–37 Weeks Gestation for Use in the Development of a Rapid test for Detection of Group B Streptococci. *Cepheid/Test Materials Agreement.*

Saade, George. Ob/Gyn. Digibind Efficacy Evaluation in Preeclampsia—DEEP (the study). *Glenveigh Research LCC.*

Sandstead, Harold. PMCH–Human Nutrition. International Society for Trace Elements Research in Humans. *National Cancer Institute R13.*

Smith, Karen. Pediatrics. Medical Complications and Parenting–Preterm Development. *NICHD/University of Texas Health Science Center–Houston R01 Subcontract* \$217,439.00/1 yr.

Recent Publications

Bulayeva N.N., and **Watson, C.S.** Xenoestrogen-induced ERK 1 and 2 activation via multiple membrane-initiated signaling pathways. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, November 2004.

Judy B.M., Curran E.M., Lubahn DB, Duru N and **Estes D.M.,** 2004. Alternation in immune responses to bacterial infection in mice fed dietary phytoestrogen genistein. *Immunology, International Proceedings*, pp 109–113.

Koldzic-Zivanovic N, Seitz PK, **Watson C.S., Cunningham K.A.,** and **Thomas M.L.** Intracellular signaling involved in estrogen regulation of serotonin reuptake. *Molecular and Cellular Endocrinology* 226 (12) 1–66, 2004.

Levine R.E., O’Boyle M., Haidet P., Lynn D., Stone M.M., Wolf D.V., Paniagua F.A. Transforming a Clinical Clerkship Through Team Learning, *Teaching and Learning in Medicine* 2004; 16(3);270–275.

McNearney T.A., Baethge B., Cao S., Lawand N., Lisse J., Alam R., and **Westlund K.** Excitatory Amino Acids, TNF- α and Chemokine Levels in Synovial Fluids of Patients with Active Arthropathies, *Clinical & Experimental Immunology* 137: 621–627, 2004.

CIRWH Calendar

CIRWH SEMINARS

Noon-1 p.m. in 2.312 Children's Hospital

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"

Location change, December seminar only: 3.300 Children's Hospital (Chairman's conference room)

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"

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, Judith M. McFarlane, R.N., Ph.D., FAAN, Texas Women's University, Domestic violence

May

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

WOMEN'S HEALTH CONFERENCES

November

November 15-17, Workplace Violence Prevention, Baltimore, Md.

December

December 7-8, National Diabetes Education Partnership meeting, Atlanta, *Linking Hands Linking Partnerships, LINKS: Learn to Implement NDEP's Knowledge and Successes*

December 8-10, Tenth Annual Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology Conference, Atlanta, Ga.

March

March 1-3, 2005, 19th National Conference on Chronic Disease Prevention and Control, Atlanta

March 17-20, 2005, Sixth Annual Sex and Gene Expression Conference, Winston-Salem, N.C.

June

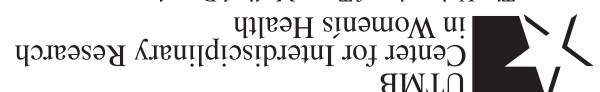
June 12-14, 2005, National HIV Prevention Conference, Atlanta, Ga.

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