



fELLOWS
& **Y**OUNG
INVESTIGATORS
NEWSLETTER



Volume 2 Issue 3

October 2003

From the Editor's Desk:

With the hot days of summer over and the briskness of autumn upon us, people have a fresh sense of being "back to work". As you will read in this issue, the planning for retreats, conferences, and symposia are well underway. Fall also brings many newcomers to the NCI campus. The Fellowship Office has recently published a very useful handbook full of information for every fellow, regardless of how long they have been here. Lastly, we all are well aware that a postdoctoral fellowship is a temporary position. As we heard during the Career Panel at last year's CCR-FYI retreat, academia need not be the primary goal for all those leaving their fellowship positions. Read on to learn about recent career trends and how you can influence your own career by attending this year's Job Fair for NIH postdoctoral and clinical fellows. As always, your news and comments to nciccrfyi@mail.nih.gov are welcome!

Kathleen M. Dohoney, Ph.D.

Table of Contents:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Fourth Annual CCR Fellows and Young Investigator's Retreat - Custom Made by YOU!	1
The Fourth HIV DRP Symposium on Antiviral Drug Resistance	2
Mentor Awards Announced	2
Hot Off the Press - The First NCI Fellowship Handbook	3

ARTICLES

FEB Workshop Series Begins with Grammar	3
The Sixth Annual Breast Cancer Faculty Retreat was held at Airlie House	4
Postdocs in Limboland! Where do we go from here?	4

DID YOU KNOW?

National Postdoctoral Association Talks with Science Policy Leaders	5
---	---

OF INTEREST

Great Data Does Not Equal a Great Paper - But It Can!	5
---	---

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Fourth Annual CCR Fellows and Young Investigator's Retreat - Custom Made by YOU!

Planning for the 4th Annual CCR-FYI Retreat is well underway and although some of you may have

been hoping to revisit Ocean City in the midst of a February blizzard, you will have to do that on your own time (and dime). This year's CCR-FYI retreat will tentatively be held **March 9 - 11, 2004** at the Marriot in Williamsburg, VA.

To ensure that the retreat best offers what fellows and young investigators of NCI CCR want,

the CCR-FYI steering committee has altered the approach to planning the retreat this year by not only incorporating the results of last year's retreat survey, but also by specifically requesting input from the CCR-FYI community regarding speakers, workshops and format. This has already proven to be a success with a great response to the call for keynote speaker nominations. Eighteen accomplished scientists spanning academia, industry and government were nominated and the retreat subcommittee is now in the process of inviting members from that list to participate in the retreat. The next objective is to identify topics of interest for the four to six workshops to be held. If you are on the CCR-postdoc listserv, you should have recently received a ballot from the CCR-FYI retreat subcommittee requesting you to vote for potential workshops and offer any additional ideas. Once the votes are tallied, the committee will begin organizing the top choices to be implemented at the retreat. Future emails may solicit volunteers to help with various aspects of the retreat including advertising, selecting the top abstracts for oral presentation, judging the posters and oral presentations, and facilitating the workshops. Keep your eyes open for these announcements! Likewise, feel free to send an email to the steering committee (nciccrfyi@mail.nih.gov) at anytime if you have comments, concerns, suggestions or questions.

Lastly, as always, the CCR-FYI steering committee welcomes new members. If your are interested, please email nciccrfyi@mail.nih.gov or attend a meeting held the 4th Thursday of every month from 12:00 - 1:00 pm in Building 37, conference room 4041.

*Kathleen M. Dohoney, Ph.D.
CCR-FYI Steering Committee*

The Fourth HIV Drug Resistance Program Symposium on Antiviral Drug Resistance

The Fourth HIV Drug Resistance Program (DRP) Symposium on Antiviral Drug Resistance will be held **December 7 - 10, 2003**, at the Westfields Conference Center in Chantilly, Virginia. It is sponsored by the HIV Drug Resistance Program of the National Cancer Institute and co-sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh. This Symposium brings together researchers who share common interests in understanding the mechanism of action of viral targets for resistance, the mechanism of antiviral therapy, and the mechanism of resistance to specific therapy. Each session is designed to focus on a

different class of molecular targets for antiviral therapy, with emphasis on normal structure and function, interactions with antiviral drugs, and the evolutionary basis and specific mechanisms of viral resistance. The program will include invited talks as well as talks and posters selected from submitted abstracts. Invited speakers who have confirmed their participation in the Symposium to date include Paul Bieniasz, Jean Chmielewski, Charles Craik, Steven Deeks, Donald Ganem, Reuben Harris, Kathryn Holmes, James Hoxie, Stuart Levy, Peter Palese, Celia Schiffer, Robert Siliciano, Joseph Sodroski and David Stammers.

Registration and abstract submission are now being accepted online at the Symposium website: <http://web.ncifcrf.gov/campus/symposium/>. There is no deadline for abstract submission, and registrations will continue to be accepted until the meeting capacity has been reached. However, to be included in the program book, abstracts must be received by November 1.

For additional information, visit the Symposium website at <http://web.ncifcrf.gov/campus/symposium/> or contact the Symposium Coordinator, Margaret Fanning (fanningm@ncifcrf.gov).

*Anne V. Arthur
HIV DRP, NCI-Frederick*

Mentor Awards Announced

The Fellowship Office is delighted to announce the winners of the 2003 NCI Outstanding Mentor and Mentor of Merit Awards. These investigators were honored at the Institute's Award Ceremony on October 9. Each year, three Outstanding Mentors receive a cash award and a beautiful engraved crystal memento. Mentors of Merit are those who scored very well in the ranking but just missed being among the top three. This year's winners are:

Outstanding Mentor

Sonia B. Jakowlew, Ph.D.
Barbara K. Vonderhaar, Ph.D.
Jonathan S. Wiest, Ph.D.

Mentors of Merit

Carl C. Baker, M.D., Ph.D.
Crystal L. Mackall, M.D.
Paul A. Randazzo, M.D., Ph.D.
Gilbert Howlett Smith, Ph.D.
Sandra M. Swain, M.D.

Investigators are nominated by at least two mentees, one of which must be a current or recent postdoctoral fellow. A committee of fellows constitutes the review panel. It is a subject of great pride for the NCI that our fellows find the mentoring you receive from our investigators so exemplary that you continue to nominate them for the award. We hope that all NCI investigators will strive for recognition as an Outstanding Mentor. The presence of such talent in our midst is part of what makes the NCI a premier training destination.

Donna L. Vogel, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, The Fellowship Office, NCI

Hot Off the Press - The First NCI Fellowship Handbook

“I wish I had something like that when I started here.” That’s a typical reaction from fellows when they see the first NCI Fellowship Handbook. A joint project of the Fellowship Office and the CCR-FYI, the Handbook uniquely addresses the specific needs of *all* NCI fellows. The web version will be available as a pdf and as an html document with live links at <http://ncifellowshiphandbook.nci.nih.gov>. The print edition is in booklet format and fits into a large (e.g. lab coat) pocket. The Handbook opens with a welcome from Dr. von Eschenbach. The main 22-page text has sections on, “What you need to know about being a fellow,” “Academic and research resources,” “Relocating,” and “Frequently Asked Questions.” Finally, a “Useful Web Sites” insert can be updated as sites change. One advantage of providing the Handbook in print and on the web is that incoming fellows can access it before they arrive on campus. Fellows who have essential information on practical matters such as housing, child care, and the community ahead of time will make the transition more easily than those who have had to confront these issues urgently upon arrival. Specifics on administrative topics and scientific resources make life at work go more smoothly. The Health Promotion Office of NCI’s Office of Education and Special Initiatives was of great editorial help, and many partners across NCI, including the CCR-FYI Steering Committee, provided valuable feedback and suggestions. We have already received enthusiastic responses from trainees and investigators, and look forward to distributing the Handbook widely to current and incoming Fellows. It is intended to be a dynamic document, so we welcome your continued feedback.

Donna L. Vogel, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, The Fellowship Office, NCI

ARTICLES

FEB Workshop Series Begins with Grammar

The NCI, CCR Fellows Editorial Board (FEB) was started almost two years ago to help NCI fellows prepare their manuscripts for publication. This year, FEB is sponsoring a series of workshops designed to offer information on scientific writing. Topics for the workshops were selected after reviewing responses to a questionnaire sent to the fellows. Most fellows who responded indicated that they wanted to learn more about grammar.

The first workshop entitled, "Become Your Own Best Editor", was held on September 23. It was presented by L. Kay Fleming, Ph.D., a science writer and editor in the Office of the Director, CCR, NCI. Dr. Fleming earned her Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, where she taught writing for several years.

The fundamental message of the workshop was that meaning determines grammar, punctuation and syntax at every level. This strategy avoids the memorization that is usually associated with the study of grammar. Dr. Fleming explained the appropriate use of “that” versus “which”, the use of articles, and subject-verb agreement based on meaning. “That” introduces something essential to the meaning, while “which” introduces a phrase or clause not essential to the meaning of the sentence. Many languages have no articles, so article use can be particularly confusing for people for whom English is a second language. Use of “a/an”, “the”, or no article is determined by whether the meaning is specific or general. Analysis of the structure of the sentence to identify the noun and the verb will ensure that subject and verb agree. These simple guidelines should help everyone avoid common grammar errors in their writing. Dr. Fleming ended the workshop by recommending additional resources for those interested in learning more: reference books on grammar and style, and courses given on campus by The Foundation for Advanced Education in the Sciences (FAES).

Topics of future workshops include writing effective sentences and paragraphs, data presentation, and the structure of a scientific paper. Would you like to request a topic? E-mail your suggestions to FEB Senior Editor Dr. Jeannine Botos at ncieditors@mail.nih.gov.

NCI, CCR Fellows Editorial Board

The Sixth Annual Breast Cancer Faculty Retreat was held at Airlie House

The Sixth Annual Breast Cancer Faculty Retreat was held on July 9th and 10th at the Airlie Conference Center in Warrenton, Virginia. The mission of the retreat was to share new scientific discoveries in breast cancer, including the areas of clinical and translational trials in breast cancer prevention and treatment, signaling pathways as targets for clinical trials, and the use of transgenic mice for translational research in breast cancer prevention and treatment. It began with an overview by Dr. Barbara Vonderhaar, Chair of the Breast Cancer Faculty (BCF), and a presentation by Consumer Advocate Rosemary Rosso, J.D., a member of the National Breast Cancer Coalition, and breast cancer survivor. Dr. Vonderhaar encouraged attendees to participate in the workshops, round table discussions, the mammary gland biology seminar series, the mouse models collective, and the working groups organized for this fall. Most of these meetings will take place on Monday afternoons, each having its own week of the month. The schedule is available from the BCF website through the CCR Faculties page <http://ccr.cancer.gov/faculties/faculty.asp?facid=129>.

Next, Rosemary Rosso reminded us about the significance of our research. She said that eradicating breast cancer was more than a microarray, a test tube or a career. We should do more, better, and faster research to find a cure for this disease that our friends and family have been stricken with and have or have not survived. At that moment I suddenly thought of the many women I know who have survived the disease. I also thought about all the women I did not know who had not, and I realized that we really have a lot more work to do. Looking around at the audience, I saw that many of the other participants in the room also appreciated the reminder of the serious nature of our duties as scientists in this field.

The broad range of disciplines in the BCF was evident in the scientific presentations that followed and lasted for the remainder of the retreat. Although there were studies from inhibiting chaperones and nutrition to vaccines and clinical trials, a common theme emerged. An understanding of the misregulated signal transduction pathways that result in the proliferation and metastasis of mammary tumors is essential for treatment and prevention. It was evident from the presentations that many of the participants had moved their research ahead through collaborations with other BCF members. As it happened at last year's retreat, my research was

beneficial to other participants, and I met several people who had an interest in my specific corner of this broad field. Again, as last year, the information flowed freely between the participants and much was learned with the common thread linking us being the overall goal rather than the specific pathway or family of proteins we were studying. Scientific discussions did not stop at the poster room or conference room. We were able to continue our discussions during the home-cooked meals provided at the Airlie Center's dining hall and after the sessions at the swimming pool and lounge.

The meeting was very productive for me, as it was for the over 100 other participants. It gave me the opportunity to communicate my research to others in this broad field and allowed me to reflect upon the significance of my research. It also stimulated new ideas and directions for continued research. I met several new people with whom I can collaborate in the upcoming year as well as other colleagues with whom I can discuss science. I am looking forward to participating in the many seminars, workshops and round table discussions by the BCF in the coming year.

*Jeannine Botos, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow, LRBGE*

Postdocs in Limboland! Where do we go from here?

A postdoctoral position is traditionally defined as a temporary position that enables a scientist to gain additional training, similar to a professional apprenticeship. Postdoctoral years serve as a nurturing ground for sharpening insight, developing scientific entrepreneurship and building intellectual independence. Thus, a postdoc appointment is an essential step whether one is planning a career in academia, in business or in the government sectors.

There was an age when doing a postdoc almost invariably meant that you had no career option other than to stay in the academics. It was the most prestigious, glorified and respected of professions. However, the past years have seen a shift in career preferences from hard core bench science to jobs in the private sector and allied fields such as science and policy, technology transfer, scientific journalism, etc.

A postdoc's decision to forsake work in academia for a more "lucrative career" often comes after much deliberation and soul searching. Very often we are so caught up in the routine that we fail

to stop and assess our scientific careers. Recent trends in the United States show that an increasing number of postdocs are holding postdoctoral appointments for much longer periods than previously seen. The results of a study published in the magazine *Science* years ago (*Science* **285**: 1533 - 1535 (1999) (<http://www.sciencemag.org>)) hinted that postdocs in the biochemical field in particular, comprise the largest proportion of untenured faculty positions even 10-13 years after their Ph.D. In another interesting study published by the National Science Foundation (NSF) (<http://www.nsf.gov/sbe/srs/issuebrf/sib99307.htm>) it was found that the percentage of postdocs in the biological sciences that transition to tenure track positions increased with time up through five years. However, at six years after receiving a Ph.D., the trend more closely matched that of other scientific fields, by showing a decrease in the likelihood of obtaining a tenure track position. Whether this reflects the increasing competitiveness in the academic fields, which results in an inability to procure tenure track positions after brief postdoc stints, or whether it is a reflection of the state of mind of the ever so confused, "I am in limboland" postdoc is anybody's guess.

As stated before, career transitions from hard-core bench science are becoming more and more common for several reasons. It is felt that on average, only 30% of all postdocs go into the academic sciences, which leaves the vast majority to pursue other careers be they in the government or industry.

The private sector is very different from the academic sciences because it is directed toward specific product development questions. Hence, the tasks are more demanding, with greater need for discipline and less opportunity to follow your own interests. What is worse is that with tightening budgets and shrinking venture capital pools for new biotech companies, competition for good and stable jobs is already growing.

The picture is not as gloomy as it seems. A sense of direction coupled with a willingness to be adaptive can take you places. So while you are debating whether you want a science-related or an alternative career, while you are sitting and using the internet as your best friend and the only window to the "real world", help is much closer than you anticipated it to be.

Right here on campus the National Institutes of Health Office of Education and the Office of Research on Women's Health will co-sponsor the

popular **Job Fair for NIH Postdoctoral and Clinical Fellows**. This will be held on **October 16, 2003** in conjunction with the **NIH Research Festival (October 14-October 17, 2003)**. On a reassuring note, last year's job fair was a huge success and attracted 31 representatives and an estimated 400 postdoctoral trainees. The reason for exhibitors returning this year was stated to be the "quality of the applicants received last year". Dr. Edward Scolnick, President Emeritus of Merck Research Laboratories will speak on "Therapeutic Advances Through Genomics: Opportunities and Limitations".

So here is your chance to let the job fair help you get your foot into the "world outside".

*Tania Fernandez, Ph.D.
Research Fellow, NCI*

DID YOU KNOW?

National Postdoctoral Association Talks with Science Policy Leaders

The Scientist (www.the-scientist.com) recently invited the National Postdoctoral Association to participate in an online discussion with science policy leaders regarding the treatment of postdoctoral fellows in US academic life science labs. Excerpts from the discussion, which touched upon compensation, training, mentorship and the length of the average postdoctoral fellowship, can be found at: http://www.the-scientist.com/yr2003/sep/opinion_030908.html

More information about the National Postdoctoral Association can be found at www.nationalpostdoc.org.

*Kathleen M. Dohoney, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow, NCI*

OF INTEREST

Great data does not equal a great paper - but it can!

Publish or Perish is our mantra, but even if your data "speaks for itself" you can't send your western blot film directly to *Nature* or *Science*. You have to write about it first. This fact holds true whether you are a student, fellow or principle investigator. In fact, writing and editing skills are especially important for

anyone who aspires to become an independent investigator. Think of all manuscripts the average independent investigator must edit, write and publish. So if you want to give yourself the valuable experience of editing scientific documents from fellows before you embark on your tenure track career or if you just want to improve your editing and writing skills for any position, consider joining the NCI CCR Fellows Editorial Board.

FEB strives to help fellows write well-organized, grammatically sound, and stylistically correct documents. This allows readers and reviewers to focus on the importance of the ideas, approaches, and the data included, and it will ultimately improve the chances of publication or funding from granting agencies. The content of ALL submissions is kept strictly confidential.

As a member of FEB, you receive hands-on and professional training in copy-editing and scientific writing. The experience, training and insight gained by working with a team, meeting deadlines and being exposed to the wide array of research performed at NCI not only looks great on any CV, but also is extremely rewarding.

To learn more about becoming a member of FEB or how to submit your document, please contact Dr. Jeannine Botos, Senior Editor, at ncieditors@mail.nih.gov or visit <http://ccr.nci.nih.gov/careers/FEB/>.

NCI CCR Fellows Editorial Board

****This document was reviewed by the NCI, Fellows Editorial Board****