NCI Center for Cancer Research

FELLOWS & YOUNG INVESTIGATORS NEWSLETTER

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From the Editor's Desk:

As the new editor, I would like to welcome you to the fourth issue of the CCR-FYI newsletter! You may have noticed that the appearance and organization of the newsletter has been modified with each issue. We believe these changes are an improvement and will make the newsletter easier to flip through despite your busy schedules. Remember, this is *your* newsletter, a perfect means to find out or let people know what is going on with the fellows and young investigators at CCR. Please feel free to let us know of any topics you would like discussed, people that should be featured (perhaps for winning an award) or announcements by e-mailing us at nciccrfyi@mail.nih.gov!

In this issue learn important information regarding the 2003 CCR-FYI Retreat, how to make a great scientific presentation, about a program that will help practice those presentation skills, and about recent scientific retreats where those skills were put to use. In addition, you will find other information of interest including NIH Child Care resources, tips on applying for grants and an opportunity to help new fellows adjust to NIH. Read on!

Kathleen M. Dohoney, Ph.D.

Table of Contents:

Announcements

CCR-FYI Retreat 2003	1
CCR Postdocs' Seminar Series	2
Upcoming Workshops	2
Gain Teaching Experience Through NIH and UMD	2
Introducing GuideDocs!	3

Articles

The 4th annual NCI-Frederick Interdisciplinary Retreat 2002	3
The NIH/IIG Immunology Retreat 2002	4
A Great Scientific Presentation - From Stress to Success!	4
First steps in Grantcraft	6

Of Interest

Child Care at the National Institutes of Health	7

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CCR-FYI Retreat 2003

Fellows! Time to get ready for the Third Annual CCR Fellows and Young Investigators Retreat! This year's retreat will be held **February 12-14, 2003** at the Princess Royale Hotel and Conference Center in Ocean City, Maryland (www.princessroyale.com). NCI will pay for your double occupancy suite and meals while attending the Retreat.

All fellows who have been here at least one year are encouraged to share their research by registering and

submitting an abstract for the retreat at www.palladianpartners.com/ncipostdoc3. The deadline for abstract submissions is **Monday, December 16, 2002.** Watch your e-mail boxes for more information!

Kathleen M. Dohoney, Ph.D.
Chair, CCR-FYI Association

CCR Postdocs' Seminar Series

Despite having the time of your life as a CCR-FYI Fellow, you all must one day leave the comfort of the NCI and make the leap into a "real" job. Obtaining your dream job requires not only the perfect resume and a fabulous publication record, but you must also have great communication skills. In the spirit of helping each other become better oral communicators, the CCR-FYI Scientific Subcommittee is planning a weekly NCI/CCR Postdocs Seminar Series. Each week one of us will present a seminar of their research. The audience will participate by commenting anonymously on all aspects of your presentation from slide construction to your ease in answering those tough audience questions. We hope to kick off the series by having a group of presentation specialists review the do's and don'ts of a good presentation. So remember, as you mail copies of your resume in anticipation of job interviews and seminar invitations you will be receiving keep the Postdocs' Seminar Series in mind. At the CCR Postdocs' Seminar Series a group of your supportive peers will be the perfect place to practice your oral presentations. Suppose you are a new postdoc and do not have any speaking invitations you should still seize this opportunity. Participation in the audience is vital to the success of this program. In addition to helping a peer with their presentation skills and learning about ongoing NCI/CCR research, this series may facilitate your future collaborations with other labs. Watch future issues of the newsletter and your email for more details.

Betsy Read-Connole, Ph.D.
Chair, CCR-FYI Scientific Subcommittee

Upcoming Workshops

The Career Development Subcommittee of FELCOM is busy planning workshops to enhance your skills and provide you with additional knowledge on alternative scientific careers. The future Sessions are listed below. As we receive conformation on the specific dates we will pass them along.

December 2002	No Workshop
January 2003	Teaching: Former NIH Postdocs as Teachers (representing a Large Teaching University, Small College, and a Montgomery County Public High School
February 2003	Proteomics & Bioinformatics
March 2003	Alternative Careers Grant Review & Bioterroroism
April 2003	Setting up a lab or Negotiation Skills
May 2003	Grant Writing (outside of the NIH) & NIH Grants
June 2003	CV Resume Writing
July 2003	Mentor/Mentee Relationship

Gain Teaching Experience Through NIH and UMD

As a Fellow or a Postdoc looking for that perfect academic job, do you wish you had teaching experience to wow the University's Search Committee? Help may be on the way. In an effort to provide classroom experience for NIH Postdocs Ms. Brenda Hanning, from the NIH Office of Education is working to establish such a mentored teaching experience for Fellows at the NIH. In October, Jonathan Wiest (CCR, Office of Training and Education), Brenda Hanning, Lou Simchowitz (NIDDK, Office of Education), and I attended a meeting at the University of Maryland, College Park to discuss this. Representatives from the University of Maryland included two professors, the Associate Dean for the College of Life Sciences, and the Associate Dean, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences. We envisage starting a mentored teaching program in the Spring 2003 semester for maybe 5 NIH postdocs. Initially the NIH postdocs would travel to Maryland and observe lecture classes, then work with a UMD mentor to learn and participate in all the aspects of teaching from choosing a textbook to assigning final grades. Many details need to be worked out of course, but I think both UMD and NIH are committed to getting this program up and running. Watch this column for updates on this exciting new NIH Program.

Betsy Read-Connole, Ph.D.
CCR/NCI FELCOM Representative

Introducing GuideDocs!

It is never easy being the new kid on the block...but a new program developed by the CCR-FYI Association called GuideDocs can help! Remember all the questions you had as a new postdoctoral fellow arriving at NIH? After little more than a day of orientation, new postdocs still have many questions regarding life on and off the NIH campus. Not only must they obtain IDs, library passes and parking permits, but they also want to know how navigate the Metro, find furniture for their apartment or child care for their children. If they are lucky enough, they may have the assistance of someone in their own lab to help them answer these many questions, however many postdocs do not have this luxury. For them, being assigned a personal GuideDoc is the answer!

Newcomers: The GuideDocs program is for any person in a mentored position, including but not limited to young investigators, clinical/postdoctoral fellows, visiting fellows/CRTA, foreign nationals and US citizens. Any newcomer interested in this service should fill out a simple questionnaire, which will be used to pair him/her up with an experienced postdoc for 3 months (minimally). This person will be a resource to you as you get adjusted to NIH, and maybe will help take some of the guesswork out of things such as the requirements for a US driver's license, daycare options, and how to file taxes. After you have been guided, we hope that you will share your knowledge with other new employees by becoming a GuideDoc.

Seasoned fellows: You already know the ropes and have a lot to offer, so why not volunteer to be a GuideDoc to a newcomer. You know that the first months can be overwhelming, but for 3 months (or more if you'd like) you can welcome and assist in a newcomer's adjustment. Fill out the GuideDocs questionnaire and we will match you up with someone new to the ranks. Show your support and let's strengthen our commitment to each other's success.

Questionnaires and volunteer forms can be found at http://ccr.nci.nih.gov/careers/fellows/default.asp or e-mail nciccrfyi@mail.nih.gov to request one.

Kathleen M. Dohoney, Ph.D.
Chair, CCR-FYI Association
Lynnette Shorts, Ph.D.
Co-chair, Community Life Subcommittee
Anne Welcker, Ph.D.
Co-chair, Community Life Subcommittee

ARTICLES

The 4th annual NCI-Frederick Interdisciplinary Retreat 2002

The fourth annual NCI-Frederick Interdisciplinary Retreat 2002 was held at the Rocky Gap Resort in Cumberland, Maryland, from Oct. 28 to Oct. 30. Approximately 150 scientists attended the retreat. The session began on Monday afternoon with opening remarks by Dr. Stuart Austin, Retreat Co-coordinator and Chief of the Gene Regulation and Chromosome Biology Laboratory (GRCBL).

There were 34 oral presentations and an equal number of posters representing a broad spectrum of research ongoing at NCI-Frederick. Principal investigators nominated post-doctoral fellows to present an overview of the work being carried out in their respective sections. The talks were short and limited to 17 minutes followed by 3 minutes for discussions.

The retreat was beneficial for fellows and principal investigators as it gave an opportunity to know and interact closely with members of other sections within NCI-Frederick and also gave an overview of the research activities going on in different labs here in Frederick.

In a broad sense, the topics covered involved studies in understanding the mechanism of tumor genesis, the role of various genes in tumor promotion, development of animal models to study these mechanisms, elucidation of the structure of proteins and RNA for drug development, study of chemoprotective mechanisms against carcinogenesis, HIV-1 entry into host cells, evolution of drug resistance in HIV-1 populations, analysis of HIV-1 RT mutants, ultimately aiming towards diagnosis, improving therapy and prevention of cancer and AIDS.

Dr. Amar Klar's talk (Principal Investigator, Gene Regulation and Chromosome Biology Laboratory) entitled 'Does nature determine human hand preference' resulted in an exciting discussion. According to his findings a single locus, RGHT, specifies preference for hand utilization in humans and that individuals with the recessive allele have a 50:50 chance of being either right-handed (RH) or left-handed (LH). He proposed a model for a single gene (RGHT = Right- and r = random-handedness) controlling human hand preference and also presented data satisfying two key genetic predictions of the model.

A more general talk was presented by Dr. Manish Agrawal on the ethics of Phase I oncology trials, which was very informative.

The poster session was the most interactive one. On one of the boards I could see flyers advertising the 'CCR-Fellows and Young Investigators Association'.

The organizers kept two hours free on the second day so that participants could move around and enjoy the beautiful locale. The food was delicious and everybody seemed to relish it. The reception on the night of October 28th featured a live performance by Mr. Chuck Cantalamessa – singer, songwriter and guitarist.

Overall it was a good meeting, well organized and well planned. I would like to make a special mention of the efforts and planning put in by Margaret Mills, Brenda Youngren, Lucretia Reaves and Terri Baker. These three stayed in the meetings and helped with the equipment. I am sure the interactions among the fellows at this retreat resulted in new ideas and plans to start new collaborations.

Rajeshri G. Karki, Ph. D.
Postdoctoral Fellow
Laboratory of Medicinal Chemistry, CCR.

The NIH/IIG Immunology Retreat 2002

The NIH/IIG 2002 Immunology Retreat was held in Airlie, VA on October 28-30. This retreat has become very popular for its excellent seminars, location, and food. This year's keynote addresses were by Dr. Antonio Lanzavecchia, who spoke on the cellular basis of immunological memory, and Dr. Jason Cyster, who covered the molecular control of B lymphocyte positioning. These three days were filled with scientific topics ranging from immunoregulation, tolerance and lymphocyte development to the ultimate question - is there life after the NIH?

The 203 posters presented over two days proved that the rainy weather did not keep the crowds away. Perhaps this was because we scientists are a resilient bunch, or perhaps because there was wine at the poster festival, but in any case, the interest was high. This year there were awards given out for best posters. The 10 finalists were: Reiko Horai (NHGRI), Susana Mendez (NIAID), Guoguang Ying (NCI), Vito Racanelli (NIDDK), Takashi Murakami (NCI), Valance Washington (NCI), Jennifer Cannons (NHGRI), Steve Bunnell (NCI), Sandy Hayes (NICHD), Bibi Bielekova (NINDS). The final award winners were Sandra Hayes, Steve Bunnell, and Bibi Bielekova. Congratulations to all the finalists and winners!

The nightlife was also memorable, as everyone relaxed and did their share of dancing (once again maybe the free beer had something to do with it). All in all the retreat was a huge success; it gave people the opportunity to listen to interesting speakers, eat delicious food, and interact in a less formal environment. Mark your calendar for next year!

Lynnette Shorts, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow
NCI-Frederick, CCR

A Great Scientific Presentation - From Stress to Success!

"Great dancers are not great because of their technique:
they are great because of their passion"

Martha Graham

If you are asking yourself what dance has to do with science you are on the wrong foot. What I was trying to emphasize is PASSION. Passion is a significant ingredient of any presentation. Rarely have I been impressed with a speaker's good "technique ", but I have always appreciated a vibrant, eloquent presenter. The lack of passion (monotonous voice pitch, inability to emphasize originality of work, a speaker who looks everywhere else except at the audience) put me quickly to, not to sleep, but to think about totally different matters. I feel bad for the wasted time. Unfortunately, passion for your work and how you reflect it is something I cannot help you with. However, I can offer advice on technique. Let's hope that an elaborated technique and a neat presentation can compensate sometimes for the lack of passion.

By now, we all know how important it is to deliver an outstanding oral presentation. The job of your dreams, or your scientific reputation could depend on this. And what else is great teaching if not skillful, eloquent oral communication of ideas and information?

I hope my advice will help you improve your abilities and confidence when preparing for a talk.

Here are my basic rules for success:

1. First, I always like to **summarize the main points** of my presentation at the very beginning and here I will do just the same:

" Today I will write about how to organize a pleasant and informative scientific talk."

You might argue that was clear from the title, but I often prefer to read the title at the opening of my talk, while emphasizing briefly the main points of interest.

2. Think well in advance about your presentation, write down occasional ideas, "sleep on it ". Gather the data and material, **decide what to present according to the scientific event and audience**, write down occasional great ideas, plan the skeleton of your speech and build on it as you become more organized. Carefully consider the right images (slides, overheads) to best support your data. Be prepared and allow time to correct any imperfect slides that arrived from the photo lab.

3. Choose a relevant, truthful title, one that correctly reflects the core of your talk not just some tangential data that might attract a larger audience. I find it so frustrating to attend a seminar with high hopes only to find out that the title, which brought me to the event, did not reflect the presented content. I feel cheated. If in doubt, select a title that sounds more like a brief conclusion of your results.

4. Have the audience in mind, **make yourself useful to them**, as a dedicated teacher would do. The audience is a very important factor that determines how detailed and "sophisticated" you should be. Remember, a symposium with the specialists in your field is different from a large congress on cell biology or a science class targeted to high school students. It is possible that few attendees are familiar with your subject, so put yourself in their shoes! Your talk should not be a "vanity fair" but rather a clear, well structured, informative and rather simple presentation of your results. Conversely, don't assume that you and only you know that topic. There are always some clever, well-read intellectuals around. Read the recent literature pertaining to your work but don't forget its history either. Maybe some pioneers of your field might be in the audience and you should better acknowledge their contribution. I remember, when I was a student in Romania, that my professors started classes with a short history and mentioned the personalities of the field. Their approach inspired respect as well as some modesty (of which we all need a dose from time to time!).

Finally, while talking, look at your audience; it is basic good manners!

5. Organize the talk into three parts - introduction (background), main body and conclusions.

PLEASE, do not luxuriate on the first two and fly like a jet through the last and most important one!

This is maybe the simplest rule of all and everybody seems to follow it. Your presentation should have an **introduction** - the platform that "propels" the audience in the right direction by providing the necessary background. I appreciate the speaker who clearly outlines the reasons and reasoning of his/her initial scientific ideas starting from the background just given. Unfortunately, too often, the speaker does not use clear connecting words or phrases, such as: "given the fact that 'X' we intended to clarify 'Y' ". Personally, I like coherence in speech: that reflects coherence and logical thinking in approaching the experiments as well.

The main segment of the presentation contains the **body**, where your results and outlines of experiments are presented. If you are in the mood**,** you could try to add some "sparks" (maybe humor such as a caricature, an old scientific picture, a non-conventional way of drawing or animating data, etc.) to enliven or give a personal note to your talk. Be creative!

Finally, the **conclusions**, the most neglected part in so many talks, should give the take-home message. I can never understand why so many speakers forget this. While in a rush to finish in time, they superficially run through this important, final-impression part. Actually, this is the most common and bothersome mistake I have encountered. It spoils the rest of the talk, no matter how good it might have been. Please, know your time limits and stay within them, so you can explain your conclusions in a detailed, eloquent manner.

6. Assess **how detailed your data should be**. Your audience and time frame should dictate the amount of detail in your data. I found that the best presenters organize the data in a simple, easy-to-understand fashion, providing less details about the techniques but more schemes and drawings highlighting the flow and meaning of work performed. Interestingly, experienced scientists have fewer and less crowded slides whereas young investigators, all too often, try to drown the audience in data and numerous, complicated slides that they never have the time to explain thoroughly!

7. Rehearse well and **respect the time allotted for your talk.** The importance of rehearsal cannot be overstated. It is best to ask an experienced colleague or your supervisor to listen and give you his/her feedback. Try to step back and critique yourself. Maybe you can use a mirror and/ or a tape recorder. Don't overdo it though, you might discover just how gifted you are for theatrical performance, and decide to change your career for the better! Just kidding! Rehearse, of course, using your visual materials and check that letters are big and bold enough when projected on the screen.

8. Leave about 20% of your time for questions (your dialog with the audience). This part is maybe the most dreaded one, so do your best to know your stuff. Don't forget to allot enough time for interacting with the audience at the end of your talk.

9. Make clear but not overcrowded slides. A picture speaks a thousand words. I can only agree. Good slides and their order are extremely useful in organizing and supporting any presentation. Use your imagination but make sure your slides are easy to decipher. If I would have to choose one capital rule, it would be:

Do NOT prepare and project a slide if you do not have the necessary time to explain it from corner to

corner! It is better to have fewer slides and spend the time (2-3 min) to elucidate the mystery encoded within. Not explaining slides thoroughly is the second most common mistake I have seen.

10. Finally, **relax before the great day**. Now, that you have been through these steps and even envisioned the stress of that big day, all you need to do is relax, especially one day before the event. Do something really different. Go to a museum - art purifies the mind and spirit. And, very important, don't underestimate the power of a good night's sleep.

My last word: **I believe a presentation is a sign of respect for the audience**; we should therefore be useful, patient and, not the least, decently dressed. Good luck!

Monica G. Marcu, PharmD, PhD
Postdoctoral Fellow
Tumor and Cell Biology Lab, CCR

First steps in Grantcraft

There is no shortage of information available about NIH grant support. In fact, the quantity can be daunting. Many intramural scientists don't even realize that 5/6 of a typical institute is devoted to extramural programs. I would like to introduce the topic, quash some myths, and give you a few key points to guide your approach.

Why "grantcraft," as opposed to the venerable "grantsmanship?" I am trying to promote this neologism to emphasize the skill set, not the person. Funded investigators are made, not born.

The take home lessons in this article are: 1) Know the process, 2) Choose the right mechanism, 3) Work with a human.

Process: Although you, as the investigator, write the application, institutions, not individuals, generally apply for grants. This means that your institution is the "applicant" and must agree that your position allows you to be the Principal Investigator. (Rarely, you may apply for a grant, such as the K22, without yet having an outside job.) You send the application to the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) by a published deadline. For a regular research grant (R01), CSR staff will independently assign the application to an Institute/Center (IC) and to an initial review group (IRG) or study section, based on the content of your proposal. CSR Study sections meet three times per year to score the applications. Each application is given a priority score on a scale of 100 (best) to 500, or "unscored" if the reviewers rate it in the lower half. All PI's receive the result and a written summary statement. Scored applications also get a percentile, to correct for variations in scoring behavior across the IRGs. At this point, IC Program Directors (or Program Officers) assess the applications in their portfolios with respect to their available funds (paylines), and make recommendations to the IC for award. By law, these recommendations receive a second round of review for program balance and policy by the IC's Board or Council. Finally, the Institute or Center makes the awards.

The process is different for non-R01 grant mechanisms and for IC initiatives, as opposed to the typical investigator-initiated application. These applications may be automatically assigned to a specific IC, have a single receipt date, a specific pot of money, and/or a special dedicated review group.

Mechanisms: The regular research project grant, R01, is the bread and butter of the grants establishment. Many other tools, R01 and otherwise, serve specific purposes. Both individual and institutional training and fellowship grants may support postdoctoral (and in some cases predoctoral) training. Beyond the training stage, mentored career awards (K series) support senior fellows and junior faculty in the transition to independence. Some of the K awards are for clinicians, some are targeted to specific research areas. For certain topics, the R03 small grant may be available as startup funding for acquiring the preliminary data needed to develop a full-scale R01.

These "oddball" mechanisms can be advantageous because they do not compete for the same pool of funds as R01s. If you have not previously been a PI, you are considered a "new investigator" and even your R01 application will receive special consideration from both Review and Program. Unlike R01s, F, T and K awards require US citizenship or permanent residency.

When an IC has determined that a research area is underfunded, it may publish an initiative to encourage applications in that area. Most Program Announcements simply state an interest, while Requests for Applications have specific funding set aside. If your research is in such a priority area, you have a special opportunity. Programs exist as well for underrepresented minorities or people with disabilities.

Humans: To a new investigator, and even an experienced PI, extramural staff can be tremendously helpful. Take advantage of their knowledge and experience while you are here – they are not only able but eager to help you. If applying for an RFA, PA, R03, or K grant, you must know ahead of time if the subject matter is in the IC's area of interest. Get the latest announcements, guidelines, and policies. It is easier for everybody if you are informed, not clueless.

For more information, see the resources below or contact me at dv1h@nih.gov

The NCI Grants Laboratory: course and resource links
The NIH Grants Page: comprehensive but daunting

Cancer Training Branch: career awards
NIH Guide to Grants and Contracts: latest IC initiatives, notices, policies
CMBB: special opportunities for minority scientists

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

OF INTEREST

Child Care at the National Institutes of Health

The National Institutes of Health is an interesting and exciting place to work, and the intensity of the work creates demands on your personal as well as your professional life. If you have a young child, or are planning to have children, the issue of child care is one you will need to consider.

The NIH has several resources to support families with young children: Child Care Resource and Referral, three licensed child care centers, parenting seminars, Lactation Consultation, and a Parenting Listserv.

The best time to find out more about these programs is before you need them!

Here is some general information about resources:

NIH Child Care Centers

There are three licensed and accredited child care centers in Montgomery County to serve NIH staff. These centers are independently operated in NIH space, serve children of different ages, and charge tuition to cover the cost of care. The centers are very popular and have long waiting lists - some families wait a year or more for care.

To find out specific information, including location, hours and fees about each child care center visit: http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/dss/special/chintro.htm
To place your child's name on the waiting list for NIH child care call: (301) 309-1466 Ext. 107.

NIH Child Care Referral Service

The NIH Work/Life Center provides referrals to all licensed child care resources, including full-day child care centers, part-day Nursery Schools and Family Child Care offered in private homes for smaller groups of children. The trained consultants at the referral services will discuss your family's needs, explain your child care options, provide you with detailed referrals and send you excellent written materials to help you with your search for child care.

This is a free service you can use by calling: (301) 435-1619.

Parenting LISTSERV

This is an interactive e-mail list for child care and parenting issues. Members participate in ongoing discussions about health, child care, baby products and resources for families. This list allows you to tap into the collective knowledge and experience of other NIH parents.

If you would like to subscribe, send an e-mail addressed to: LISTSERV@NIH.GOV. Insert the following text in the message body: subscribe parenting_list *your name*
(Substituting your first and last name for *your name.)*

For more in formation about the Lactation Consultation and Services and Parenting Seminars, contact the NIH Work/Life Center at: (301) 435-1619.

For more information about NIH Child Care and general child care issues, contact the NIH Child Care Coordinator, Ms. Mary Ellen Savarese at: (301) 402-8180 or savaresem@mail.nih.gov.

Mary Ellen Savarese
NIH Child Care Coordinator

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