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INVESTIGATORS
NEWSLETTER



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From the Editor's Desk:

Well into 2003 and a couple of months since the Third Annual CCR-FYI Retreat, we finally have the newest issue of the CCR-FYI Newsletter. Read on to learn about FELCOM sponsored events, the recent Molecular Targets Retreat and the results from the CCR-FYI Retreat survey. In addition, Dr. Donna Vogel from the Fellowship Office outlines a number of services on campus that are available to postdocs. New in this issue is a "Did You Know?" section posting facts that all postdocs should know. Remember, we are always welcoming articles for future issues! Let me know your news!

Kathleen M. Dohoney, Ph.D.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

FARE Travel Awards

FELCOM is sponsoring its 10th annual NIH wide Fellows Award for Research Excellence or FARE 2004 competition. Entry into this competition requires

only that you submit an abstract. The abstracts are graded and authors of the top abstracts are awarded a travel stipend of \$1000.00. In addition to money, winners get to present their work at the Wednesday Afternoon Lecture Series (WALS) and help judge abstracts for next year's event. Abstracts for FARE 2004 will be accepted until April 30th. I encourage you to

Providing support for fellows at CCR

CCR-FYI Association is supported by the CCR Office of the Director

submit your abstract. For more information please visit the web site (<http://felcom.nih.gov/FARE/>).

2003 NIH Job Fair

FELCOM is working with NIH administration to solicit companies for this year's event. Since many of you will be looking to advance your careers, this is an opportunity to see many companies actively searching for experienced postdoctoral fellows. Representatives from each company will answer questions and disseminate information on their corporations. Please visit the FELCOM web site for more information (<http://felcom.nih.gov/>).

*Valance Washington, Ph.D.
CCR/NCI FELCOM Representative*

Fellows' Social

FELCOM presents the April 2003 Fellows' Social! Join fellows, postdocs, graduate students, and their families Friday, April 25 from 6-11pm at FAES house (9101 Old Georgetown Road at the corner of Old Georgetown Road and Cedar Lane). Admission includes snacks, drinks and music and is \$6 in advance or \$8 at the door. To purchase tickets in advance, contact your FELCOM representative or Helen Green (greenh@mail.nih.gov) by April 18th.

CCR-FYI 2003 Travel Award Winners

Congratulations to the eight winners for Outstanding Oral Presentation and Outstanding Poster Presentation announced at the Third Annual CCR-FYI retreat held February 12-14th in Ocean City, Maryland. Selecting the top presentations from a total of over 240 was not an easy task, especially given the caliber of research the postdoctoral fellows and trainees displayed at the retreat. A panel of judges scored the oral and poster presentations for Scientific Merit, Methodology, Presentation, Visual Presentation, Creativity and Originality. Winners included postdocs soon to be on their way to graduate and medical schools, first year postdoctoral fellows as well as more senior fellows. Thanks to support from the CCR Office of the Director, each winner was the recipient of a \$1000 Travel Award and a certificate detailing their accomplishment. The winners for Outstanding Oral Presentation were Sylvia Ng, Ph.D. (CTB), Osarenoma Olomu, B.A. (POB), Sagar Sengupta, Ph.D. (LHC) and Ye Zhou, M.D., Ph.D. (LMI). Winners for Outstanding Poster Presentation included Yehudit Birger, Ph.D. (LMET), Melissa Maderia, Ph.D. (LMC), Keith Marin, B.S. (LCCTP) and Satinder Rawat, Ph.D. (LECB).

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

ARTICLES

The First Annual Meeting of the NPA: Building a Foundation for Positive change

What exactly is a postdoc? How do we increase respect for postdoctoral fellows? Can we improve the career training for these scholars who are so vital to the health of our scientific endeavors? These are just a few of the questions that were discussed at the first annual meeting of the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) on March 14-15, 2003, in Berkeley, California.

"What exactly is the NPA?" is the question that you may be asking right now. The constitution of the NPA, as ratified at the meeting, defines the NPA as an organization "providing a national voice and seeking positive change for postdocs." After attending the meeting as a representative of CCR-FYI, I would define the NPA as a body of postdoctoral representatives and their advisors who are willing to listen to real issues and tackle systemic problems in order to improve the career development of fellow scientists. Reflecting the diversity of the talented scholars they represent, the attendees included US and international fellows as well as faculty and administrators from a wide variety of institutions. The meeting was short but quite successful in starting a dialogue, building a sense of comradery, and defining key issues to address.

A year ago, the NPA was just a concept put forth by seven postdocs who had been instrumental in postdoctoral associations at their individual institutions and saw the need to effect change at a national level. Over the ensuing year, and with many hours of hard work behind the scenes, the founding group has brought that concept to life in the form of a non-profit organization to represent postdocs. In order to establish the NPA, they garnered the support of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and successfully wrote a grant that was funded by the Alfred P. Sloan foundation. The NPA is not intended to be a collective bargaining group or union, but rather a consensus-building coalition of individual scholars, postdoctoral associations, and faculty advisors. It is this forward thinking that gives the NPA the ability to involve a wide variety of stakeholders and therefore address key issues at both the local and national level. Specifically, the NPA is committed to the following goals:

- Establish a self-sustaining, democratic organization to **provide a voice** for postdoctoral scientists.
- Build consensus regarding **best-practices policies** for postdocs, develop educational initiatives, and encourage their implementation.
- Work collaboratively with government bodies,

funding agencies and professional organizations to **advocate** for improvements in postdoctoral policies.

- Assist in the **creation and maintenance of Postdoctoral Associations** at institutions
- **Provide information** for postdocs on policies and compensation at institutions
- **Host a website** to serve career needs of postdocs and provide a forum (www.nationalpostdoc.org)

The 2003 NPA meeting was designed to be an environment to foster collaborative efforts rather than confrontation and the networking time was key to set the stage for system-wide change. Over the course of a very busy day, attendees at the national meeting discussed several policy items and helped to set an agenda for the executive board to follow. Some of the issues raised, such as equality of employee status, salaries, respect, and quality of mentoring impact all postdocs. Through all of the discussions, it became clear that information is going to be a critical component of our dialogue. The NPA hopes to create a database through collaboration with the Postdoc Survey Project of the research society Sigma Xi (www.sigmaxi.org/). The information gleaned from such a survey will be some of the first efforts at tracking postdoctoral policies and practices nationwide. Geoff Davis presented Sigma Xi's vision for this project that is set to pilot in several institutions this year. NPA subcommittees such as the diversity subcommittee and international postdoc subcommittees were developed at the meeting and will use many of the benchmarks identified by the survey to improve conditions for all postdocs regardless of their background. Some common themes emerged from the keynote talks. Michael Teitelbaum, program director of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, congratulated the NPA on their progress thus far and encouraged the attendees to **have patience** as they worked for large scale transformation. Both Dr. Keith Yamamoto (Vice Dean for Research at UCSF School of Medicine), and Dr. Frank Solomon (Professor of biology at MIT) spoke about **changing the paradigm of graduate and postdoctoral training** in order to avoid the holding pattern that many postdoc positions have become. Attendees were encouraged to **think globally and act locally** by Dr. James Nelson of Stanford University. The NIH viewpoint was given by Dr. Walter Schaffer from the Office of Extramural Research, who pointed out that mission of NIH is not only to support research but also to support research training. These themes were echoed often in small group discussions as we worked on concrete ways to put these ideas into action.

The NPA national meeting was just the start. We hope to see this effort grow over the years to come. The NPA is a voice for you and we want to provide the access and the tools to affect system-wide improvement.

All of you are key to keeping this momentum going! We have just begun to address the issues of achievable change and are forming alliances with key stakeholders. What can you do?

- Become involved with your local postdoc association. We have tremendous opportunities at the NCI and the CCR-FYI has been created specifically to address fellow-specific issues and help you know more about these opportunities. Join the NPA (www.nationalpostdoc.org) – whether you are interested in policy or publicity, diversity or details, there is a place for you in the NPA. Check out the website for more information. Though many of the issues to be addressed by the organization deal with domestic funding, the NPA is not limited to US citizens. This group is intended to represent all postdoctoral scholars whether international and a subcommittee exists to specifically address the unique needs of international scholars.
- Spread the word to your colleagues that these advocacy groups exist.
- Let your opinions be heard – attend town meetings and fill out surveys. Our administration is really quite fellow friendly and wants to hear ways to improve your training.

*Melinda Merchant, MD, PhD
Pediatric Oncology Branch*

You Got a Free T-shirt and We Got Your Thoughts: the CCR-FYI Retreat Survey Results

Maybe it was the draw of a free T-shirt that caused the overwhelming response to the 2003 CCR-FYI Retreat Survey this year. Three hundred fifteen of the over 400 retreat participants took the time to fill out the survey and give their thoughts on how to improve the retreat for next year. Reading the surveys was much like reading *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*...some gave the retreat extremely high marks and felt it was definitely worth their time, others enjoyed it, but gave constructive remarks for improvement and one person remarked that he would have been happier looking at the NCI CCR website to "get the same information". Guess you can't please everyone!

Overall, the retreat was rated a success. Fifty-eight percent felt the time of year was not important. The remaining 42% was split with regards to winter being the best or worst time to hold the retreat. A couple of people commented that they would not mind the winter so long as the retreat took place near a ski resort! Thirty-two percent felt that Ocean City was too far, but the majority of respondents felt it was great (26%) or at least

convenient (41%). The food at the Princess Royale Hotel was overwhelmingly...satisfactory (68%). The biggest complaint was the absence of signs identifying vegetarian dishes. The presentations by the invited speakers were scored very interesting (55%) to fairly interesting (43%) and the majority of respondents (63%) did not use the opportunity to speak with the invited speakers. Most considered both the oral and poster sessions to be fairly interesting (71% and 67%, respectively). Some people wrote in the margin of the survey that they would have preferred more oral presentations, whereas others requested that there be fewer. Forty-one percent of the respondents found the workshops to be very helpful and 55% scored them acceptable. Some felt that the panel discussions, though informative, often went too long. As for the schedule, 70% felt it was perfect, although a few did suggest that there be more "free time" in the future. Lastly, 95% of the survey respondents said that they would be back next year!

Many people added extra comments to the survey that I would like to address. For instance, many wondered why we could not hold the retreat closer to the NIH campus. The problem stems from the fact that the government will only pay for transportation and lodging for the retreat so long as it takes place greater than 35 miles away. Last year Baltimore fit that description, but this year it must have inched closer to Bethesda since the new guidelines prevented us from holding the retreat there again. In addition, the large size of the retreat limits the number of suitable locations. Secondly, some felt that not all fields or fellows within the NCI were represented equally (i.e. protein chemistry/proteomics, clinical fellows). This is true and can only be resolved if more people from these disciplines actually register for the retreat. So recruit, recruit, recruit! Lastly, although being part of a government institution offers us many privileges, we cannot use our government appropriated funds to pay for an open bar. Sorry! So remember if you want to quench your thirst bring your cash and we'll see you at an even better retreat next year!

(A review of the Third Annual CCR-FYI Retreat will be published in the April 18th Issue of Science's Next Wave Postdoc Network <http://nextwave.sciencemag.org/pdn/>)

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

Molecular Targets Retreat Recap

On February 6th and 7th, the National Cancer Institute's Molecular Targets program held a retreat at the Marriott Hunt Valley Inn in Hunt Valley, Maryland. Clinical and basic researchers from NCI and elsewhere came together to present and discuss the latest

approaches to targeted cancer treatment. It was interesting to see the many posters prepared by NCI fellows, as well as two full days of presentations on research aimed at inhibiting cancer at the molecular level.

Specific targets for inhibition in different types of cancer were discussed. These included ubiquitously expressed and utilized proteins such as hsp90 and the multicatalytic proteasome, discussed by Dr. Len Neckers, Cell and Cancer Biology Branch, CCR, NCI, Dr. Allan Weissman, Regulation of Protein Function Laboratory, CCR, NCI, and Dr. Kenneth C. Anderson, Dana Farber Cancer Institute. They explained that although pathways involving these molecules are functioning in all cells, some types of cancer cells have an increased requirement for their activity. Therefore, by inhibiting these molecules, cancer cells are effectively targeted through their lower threshold of tolerance for the inhibitors. Another specific target for cancer treatment, AKT or protein kinase B (PKB), was discussed by Dr. Phil Dennis, Cancer Therapeutics Branch, CCR, NCI. AKT is not active in resting cells, but becomes active in cancer cells as a means of abrogating apoptotic signals brought about by chemotherapeutic agents.

Strategies for small molecule drug development were discussed at length. Dr. Gregory Verdine, Harvard University, explained an approach called "peptide morphing." A drug is designed based on the structure of peptides known to target a molecule of interest, eliminating the problems encountered when delivering real peptides *in vivo*. When designing a library to find the ideal drug, diversity is important. Dr. Verdine presented a scheme for varying chiral centers in peptide-like drugs as a means of introducing diversity beyond varying amino acid side chains. To help researchers with drug discovery, panel discussions were held regarding the use of NCI's resources for drug development and testing.

At the Molecular Targets program retreat, NCI investigators were able to hear about some of the most exciting advancements and ideas in cancer research. Though each laboratory has its own approach and/or molecule to be exploited for the ultimate goal of cancer treatment, retreats like this one are a reminder that we are all working toward a common goal, and that achievement of that goal will require employing diverse approaches and collaboration.

*Susan M. Keezer, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow*

Not Just for FTE's

NIH has a number of services available to assist employees, but many fellows may not realize these services are also available to them. The following is a selection, with brief descriptions of their services. You

do not need to be a federal employee to take advantage of the expertise and resources provided by these organizations.

NCI's Administrative Resource Centers (ARCs), <http://camp.nci.nih.gov/admin/directory/topic/top15.htm>, are the primary source for administrative services in support of your research. They work for you, not only for the investigators, and can help you with benefits, stipends, and other pay-related questions.

The Cancer Research Training Award (CRTA) program description is a full explanation of the CRTA provisions, including stipend amounts and benefits. (<http://camp.nci.nih.gov/admin/crta/index.html>)

The NCI Office of Diversity and Employment Programs (ODEP) (<http://camp.nci.nih.gov/admin/odep/>) provides information and programs for quality of worklife, recruitment, and Equal Employment Opportunity. In addition, this office also offers information regarding temporary/shared-housing arrangements.

The NIH Recreation and Welfare Association, Inc. (R&W) (<http://www.recgov.org/r&w/r&w.html>) is not just gift shops and yoga classes. The R&W provides bi-weekly listings of temporary and permanent housing available within the Bethesda commuting area.

The NIH Work/Life Center (WLC) (<http://wflc.od.nih.gov/>) can help you balance the increasing demands of research with personal interests and responsibilities. They are in Building 31 Room B2 B47. WLC provides individual career counseling, and has a resource library of job and career development books, audiotapes, and videos. They also hold the "Phases and Faces of Life" Seminar Series.

The NIH Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (<http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/ds/eap/index.html>) provides free and confidential counseling for individuals and groups when personal issues affect the workplace. The EAP provides professional consultation services, assessment, referral, short-term counseling, and follow-up

The NIH Office of the Ombudsman (Center for Cooperative Resolution – the "other" CCR) (<http://www4.od.nih.gov/ccr/>) is a neutral, independent, and confidential resource providing informal assistance in resolving work-related conflicts, disputes and grievances.

The NIH Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) (<http://oeo.od.nih.gov/>) assists in assuring that all programs, functions, and activities of the NIH are carried out in compliance with the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity statutes, laws and regulations.

The Fellowship Office links to all these and more from our website, <http://www.nci.nih.gov/fellowships> on the "Are you a current postdoc" page or, equivalently, on the sidebar under "Fellowship Office Partners."

*Donna L. Vogel, MD, PhD
Director, The Fellowship Office, NCI*

DID YOU KNOW?

You have money for travel?

The lab travel budget is based on a formula that has an allocation per fellow for travel. Principal Investigators are responsible for distributing that money to the fellows. For instance, in some cases it may be appropriate for a fellow to get two trips to conferences and in another case none. Therefore, you should discuss with your PI your travel for the year and decide what is the best for you. (NCI CCR Office of the Director)

There is more to your annual renewal than signing the dotted line?

As a mentor, your PI is responsible for advising you on all aspects of your training including your career goals as well as your research. On July 30, 2001, the CCR Office of the Director sent all PIs a form to be filled out and discussed with each postdoc at the time of their annual renewal. The VF/CRTA Training Plan Update is designed to stimulate discussion between PIs and their postdocs regarding their training and is not meant to be a report card of the postdoc's progress. All Administrative Resource Centers (ARCs) have these forms. The forms will also be made available on the web shortly. For the Guide to Training and Mentoring at NIH go to http://www1.od.nih.gov/oir/sourcebook/ethic-conduct/TrainingMentoringGuide_7.3.02.pdf

OF INTEREST

Support a Fellow CCR Fellow!

Enjoy the first Spring flowers and CCR fellow Monica Marcu's photographic view of Nature at her art exhibition: "Nature - my fourth dimension" presented at Brookside Gardens Atrium of the Visitors Center, from March 15th to May 1st. http://www.mc-mncppc.org/parks/brookside/artistbio_marcu.shtm