60th anniversary father-son Grand Rounds draws huge crowd

Dr. John I. Gallin and Dr. James F. Holland at the Clinical Center 60th anniversary Grand Rounds.

Clinical Center Director Dr. John I. Gallin began the special anniversary lecture by highlighting a few of the many scientific and clinical advances made since the Clinical Center first opened its doors to patients on July 6, 1953, and showing newsreel clips from the early days of the CC provided by the National Library of Medicine. He concluded his remarks by thanking the thousands of patients who have been “our partners in research” for the past 60 years.

Gallin then introduced the first guest lecturer, Dr. James F. Holland, Distinguished Professor of Neoplastic Diseases at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, who won the Lasker award in 1972 for his contributions to the development of cancer chemotherapy. Holland, an NCI “alumnus” who was at the Clinical Center on the day it opened in 1953, reviewed the critical work done at the CC in developing chemotherapy for cancer, and then focused on the 20-year effort of his team’s investigation of the human mammary tumor virus. Using molecular methods, they are studying its possible etiologic role for breast cancer, as well as potential therapeutic and preventive implications. He described their findings thus far and expressed optimism that future research will indeed identify the role of this virus in breast cancer in some patients.

Next, Dr. Steven M. Holland, Chief of the Laboratory of Clinical Infectious Diseases at NIAID and NIH Deputy Director for Intramural Clinical Research, and son of Dr. James Holland, spoke on the topic “Location Matters: Understanding Mycobacterial Susceptibility.” Holland described the 20-year process by which he and his team have come to understand that where in the body such an infection is located says worlds about the susceptibility factors, a realization that leads back to the importance of patient-centered research. He concluded by saying that patient-centered research “has many twists and turns,” and can be confusing. But it is also “incredibly exciting…and what NIH is all about.”

PhD students explore “bench-to-bedside” research during CC course

“Transformative,” “inspiring,” and “very insightful.” These are just a few of the words of praise from students who participated last month in a new Clinical Center course, “Clinical and Translational Research for PhD Students.”

Twenty-seven PhD students involved in basic scientific research took part in the intensive, two-week course, which is designed to expose talented young scientists to the exciting collaborative nature of clinical and “bench-to-bedside” research. The students represented a broad range of areas of scientific research, including Biomedical and Electrical Engineering, Pharmacology, Nutrition, Nursing Science, and Microbiology, among others.

The students came from 16 different public and private academic institutions across the country, as well as research institutions in Puerto Rico and Sweden.

Terra Moody, a program analyst in the Office of Clinical Research Training and Medical Education and the course coordinator, was responsible for organizing a rich program of activities for the students, including meetings with clinician investigators, participation in a mock institutional review board, and a session where students learned about the process of filing an investigational new drug application with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

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PhD students

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“It is wonderful to see this course mature from our pilot last year,” says Dr. Frederick Ognibene, CC deputy director for Educational Affairs and Strategic Partnerships. “We had nearly 50 applicants, and were able to select very highly qualified individuals to participate in this year’s course.”

“This was a diverse group of very bright and engaged students who were eager to learn,” Dr. Juan Lertora, faculty lead for the program, agrees. “They appreciated the opportunity to meet and interact with PhD scientists working in clinical and translational research at the NIH, who served as role models for them.”


The 2013 class of the course “Clinical and Translational Research for PhD Students”

“Students reflect on “Clinical and Translational Research for PhD Students” course at CC

“It was inspiring to see the research opportunities available, and to experience the collaborative and supportive research system firsthand.”
—Amanda Croasdell, University of Rochester, Toxicology

“Learning about the collaborative nature of clinical research was very insightful. It was enlightening to learn how effective scientists and clinicians are at the NIH in collaborating and conducting groundbreaking clinical research.”
—Melissa Powell, Virginia Commonwealth University, Neuroscience

“This experience showed me how PhDs can play a key role in clinical trials. Learning the structure of NIH and the Clinical Center also informed me of potential future career pathways.”
—Travis Shaffer, City University of New York Graduate Center, Chemistry

Herscovitch named president-elect of SNMMI

Dr. Peter Herscovitch, director of the CC Positron Emission Tomography Department, is president-elect of the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging, a 19,000-member international scientific and medical organization that advances the science, technology and practical application of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging. He will become SNMMI president in June 2014.

In his role as president-elect, Herscovitch will focus on translation of new radiopharmaceuticals into clinical practice, and on implementation of the new SNMMI strategic plan to strengthen the specialty of nuclear medicine.” Other important areas are education for SNMMI members and outreach to referring physicians and patients” he says."We also need to develop collaborative training pathways with radiology to prepare the next generation of nuclear medicine physicians and physician-scientists.”

Herscovitch was also recently named president-elect of the International Society for Cerebral Blood Flow and Metabolism, a society whose founders included Dr. Seymour S. Kety and Dr. Louis Sokoloff, both former NIH researchers.

Herscovitch has served at the Clinical Center since 1987. He was named chief of the PET section that year, and in 2005 was appointed director of the PET Department. Prior to his career at NIH he was an attending physician at Barnes Hospital, and assistant professor of neurology and radiology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. He holds a medical degree from McGill University.

Go to http://interactive.snm.org to learn more about the Society of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging.
New clinical fellows from across the country mingled at a welcome reception held on July 9 and hosted by the Clinical Center’s Office of Clinical Research Training and Medical Education. The fellows networked with graduate medical education training program directors, institute and center directors, scientific and clinical directors, and other NIH medical and administrative staff.

NIH clinical fellows develop competence as medical, surgical or dental specialists and collaborate with world-renowned mentors to conduct cutting-edge patient-oriented research as they actively participate in a variety of investigational protocols at the CC.

The CC sponsors eighteen medical/surgical specialty or subspecialty training programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, and the NIH supports numerous one-of-a-kind clinical or translational research fellowship training programs within its constituent Institutes.

For more information on graduate medical education at NIH, visit clinicalcenter.nih.gov/training.

Forty Clinical Center employees honored with NIH Director’s Award

“It’s always a pleasure to acknowledge excellence,” said NIH Director Francis S. Collins as he took the podium and introduced the annual NIH Director’s Award ceremony, held in the Ruth L. Kirschstein Auditorium of the Natcher Conference Center on June 12.

Collins praised the awardees, saying, “Because YOU serve” is this year’s theme. I want to thank all of you for the work YOU do. You are deeply valued. We could not do what we do here without each and every one of you. Your diverse accomplishments demonstrate how important NIH’s work is and how it serves to improve the health not only of our nation, but the world as a whole.”

While acknowledging that 2013 has been a challenging year, Collins said, “I’m still an optimist,” and added, “There’s an abundance of evidence that progress is being made, and that some of the most exciting days for NIH lie ahead.”

There was a moment of levity as Collins (as well as the NIH directors and other leaders on stage) all donned shades on cue, and Collins moved to the center of the stage. There he performed a new, original composition for the crowd: “The Sequester Blues.”

The program also featured music provided by the NIH Community Orchestra, and the NIH Chamber Singers. But the main business of the day was honoring NIH employees for “superior performance and special efforts significantly beyond their regular duty requirements.”

To the forty CC employees who earned this great distinction: congratulations, and thanks for your exemplary work!

See sidebar on this page for full list of awardees.
The 10th annual John Laws Decker Memorial Grand Rounds lecture

At the 10th Annual John Laws Decker Memorial Lecture in June (left to right): Dr. Antonio (Tito) Fojo, Senior Investigator, Medical Oncology Branch, NCI, and 2012 recipient of the Distinguished Clinical Teacher Award; Dr. Michael Gottesman, NIH Deputy Director for Intramural Research; and Dr. Abbas Ali, co-chair, NIH Fellows Distinguished Clinical Teacher Award Selection Committee.

Dr. Fojo gave the lecture “Novel Paradigms in Cancer that May Lead to Better Therapies,” in which he called Decker’s work “visionary,” and told a full house, “One of my objectives is to get you to change your thinking about how we evaluate cancer.” Go to http://videocast.nih.gov to see a videocast of the lecture.

“Sibling Superheroes” visit Clinical Center

In July, 14 brothers and sisters of Clinical Center pediatric cancer patients took part in the sixth annual Sibling Day, co-hosted by the Children’s Inn at NIH. Other sponsors were the National Cancer Institute Pediatric Oncology Branch, the National Institute of Mental Health and the Clinical Center Rehabilitation Medicine Department’s Recreational Therapy Program.

“The goals of this program are for siblings to learn about the treatment procedures their brother or sister experiences. We also provide a supportive opportunity for open discussion of feelings and reactions to illnesses,” said Sibling Day founder Dr. Lori Wiener, co-director of the Behavioral Science Core and head of the Psychological Support and Research Program in the National Oncology Branch of the National Cancer Institute.

This year’s Sibling Day theme was “Sibling Superheroes.” The day began with an ice breaker, where each sibling imagined their own unique superpower and decorated “superhero” capes.

Other activities included a tour of an operating room, where the group learned about OR procedures and anesthesiology; a visit to Laboratory Medicine, where the siblings examined lab equipment and learned about hematology and urinalysis, and examined a mock MRI machine (provided by NIMH). Liam Axelrod said the MRI “looks like a donut that’s eating you.”

After lunch, the siblings played therapeutic games and drew symbols that represented themselves on their superhero shields. These activities illustrated the idea that every person sees something different depending on their circumstances.

Donna Gregory, chief of the Recreational Therapy Program; Sima Zadeh, pediatric fellow, NCI; and Children’s Inn staff coordinated the afternoon activities.

At the end of the day, each sibling was recognized as they received a “Super Sib, Super Star” award at an award ceremony followed by an ice cream social. Seven-year-old Declan said, “I wish we could have Sibling Day more often, like once a month.”

“It’s important to provide brothers and sisters with recognition and validation for their unique role in their siblings’ lives,” said Wiener.

A note from the Editor: There is a correction to the print edition of the July 2013 issue of CC News. Alice “Frankie” Smyth was recognized for her 40 years of service at the NIH CC; she is not retiring. Our apologies, Ms. Smyth!