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An update on the people and activities of the Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine
Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA

May 2013

SPECIAL EDITION: NEW FACULTY

Renowned G.I. Specialist to join Emory Pathology Leadership (See Comment)

Alyssa Krasinskas, MD

After serving as national President of the Gastrointestinal Pathology Society last year, what’s the next step up? For Alyssa Krasinskas, MD, it’s moving to Emory this fall to become the Director of our GI Pathology Section and Director of Surgical Pathology at Emory University Hospital. Dr Krasinskas is already one of the most visible and accomplished specialists in her field, and her blue-ribbon record in diagnostics, research, and teaching provide an ideal basis for leadership in our Department. A graduate of the University of Rochester School of Medicine, she completed her AP/CP residency and a year as Chief Resident at the University of Pennsylvania, followed by a three-year laboratory research fellowship there studying transplantation immunology, particularly the mechanisms of antigen presentation in cardiac, liver, lung, and other solid-organ allografts. She then remained at UPenn for a year of clinical fellowship in surgical and GI pathology before joining the faculty of the University of Pittsburgh/UPMC in 2002, where she is now an Associate Professor. Dr Krasinskas has been Director of both the highly regarded GI Pathology clinical service and GI Pathology fellowship program at Pittsburgh for the past six years, has served on the elite Surgical Pathology Committee of the CAP since 2009, and has authored more than ninety papers, chapters, and reviews. Her comprehensive expertise in clinical, diagnostic, and molecular aspects of GI tract disorders, as well as her gifts as a speaker, have been showcased in numerous high-profile conferences and lectureships, including the prestigious USCAP “short courses” she has presented every year since 2006. In moving to Emory this July, she brings a wealth of experience to our leadership team and further elevates one of the premier academic GI Pathology programs in the country. We are proud to welcome Dr Krasinskas into our Department.

Comment: Dr Krasinskas is one of eight outstanding new faculty who have been recruited onto Pathology’s academic clinical team over the past five months. Another star in this group, Dr Alessandra Schmitt, was featured in our January Newsletter; you’ll meet the rest of the constellation on pages 2-4 of this edition. Congratulations to all these new colleagues, and to everyone who helped make these transformational recruitments possible.

Emory Labs to Offer Genomic Assays for Cancer

Not all of the new arrivals are people. In recent weeks, Emory Medical Laboratories (EML) has installed new instruments that enable us to offer DNA sequencing- and microarray-based testing for clinical cancer diagnostics. The MiSeq™ sequencer, now housed in the Molecular Diagnostics lab, can determine 4.5 gigabases of sequence daily; it will be used to examine selected genes in patients’ DNA to detect sequences associated with specific cancer types or that can help in choosing the most effective anticancer therapies. And the new Affymetrix™ array instrument, located in Cytogenetics, can scan up to 2.6 million unique markers in the genome, allowing some cancer-associated genetic abnormalities to be detected more readily than by conventional cytogenetic methods. EML plans to offer these new test modalities initially for certain lung, brain, and hematologic malignancies, with Emory pathologists interpreting the results in light of emerging data on cancer genomics and pharmacogenomics and of other clinical findings in each patient.

Above: Associate Professor Debra Saxe, PhD, and Assistant Professor Mike Rossi, PhD, stand proudly beside the new Affymetrix™ instrument.

Left to Right: Professor Karen Mann, MD, PhD, and Associate Professor Charlie Hill, MD, PhD, with the MiSeq™ sequencer and Lisheng Zhang, MD, PhD, who is a fellow in Molecular Genetic Pathology (but see page 31).
NEW FACULTY – Carla L. Ellis, M.D., M.S.

Our newest renal and genitourinary (GU) pathology specialist, Carla Ellis, MD, MS, comes to us this summer directly out of fellowship training at Johns Hopkins. But her experience in our profession dates back to 1998, when, after earning her undergraduate degree cum laude at Howard University, she enrolled in a two-year Master’s program in Anatomic Pathology at the University of Maryland in Baltimore. With Master’s degree in hand, she next spent four years working as a Pathologists’ Assistant and transfusion medicine technologist before entering medical school at the University of Nevada in 2003. Dr Ellis then was recruited into the Pathology residency program at Johns Hopkins in 2007, and has remained there for the past six years, earning dual Board certifications in AP and CP and then completing a fellowship in renal pathology (2011-12) followed by her current fellowship in GU pathology, which she will finish at the end of June. Along the way, she has already published sixteen papers (seven of them as first author), and garnered awards at each step of her training, including the Excellence in Urological Pathology from the International Society of Urologic Pathology in 2011, and a Liliane Striker Young Investigator Award from the Renal Pathology Society last year. As an Assistant Professor in our Anatomic Pathology Division, Dr Ellis initially plans to divide her time between the renal and GU subspecialty services at EUH, both of which will benefit from her award-winning teaching, investigative, and diagnostic skills.

NEW FACULTY – Shahrzad Ehdaivand, M.D., M.P.H.

We can all feel a little safer – as well as elated - knowing that Shahrzad Ehdaivand, MD will join our faculty as an Assistant Professor in July. While pursuing her Master’s in Public Health degree from Dartmouth University, which she earned in 2004, Dr Ehdaivand began her career doing field studies on environmental toxins in Tanzania and Vietnam. In recent years, she has applied some of those skills to research aimed at optimizing biosafety training and practices in anatomic pathology labs. But her main interests now lie in breast, cytologic, and gynecologic (GYN) pathology, the areas on which she focused during a yearlong fellowship at Brown University and the Women and Infants Hospital in Providence, R.I., last year. Dr Ehdaivand, who earned her undergraduate degree in 2003 at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, and her medical degree at Brown in 2008, is currently completing her final year in Brown’s combined AP/CP residency, which she interrupted temporarily in order to pursue her fellowship. Dr Ehdaivand’s current scholarship focuses on endometrial carcinoma and triple-negative breast cancers, but her broad expertise in surgical and cytologic pathology, together with her love of teaching and her decidedly non-toxic personality, make her a wonderful addition to our Anatomic Pathology team at Grady Memorial Hospital.

NEW FACULTY - Brian Quigley, M.D.

Brian Quigley, MD had no idea what lay in store for him when he joined us as a Surgical Pathology Fellow last July. A graduate of the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, he had just completed his AP/CP residency at the University of South Florida in Tampa, including a final year as Chief Resident, and was weighing long-term opportunities in Florida. But, luckily for us, he opted at the last minute to postpone those plans and enroll in our fellowship instead, with the goals of sharpening his general diagnostic skills and pursuing an interest in GI and pancreatobiliary pathology. Dr Quigley came to us very highly recommended, a summa cum laude graduate of the University of Missouri, with memberships in Phi Beta Kappa and Alpha Omega Alpha, whose generalist leanings are clear from the seven papers and one book chapter he has written on a wide range of clinical topics, all published in the past three years. And he showed such talent as a diagnostician and colleague that, midway through his fellowship, we invited Dr Quigley to join us as a new Assistant Professor and member of our attending faculty in general surgical pathology. Luckily for us, he accepted. With all of the paperwork now complete, Dr Quigley has officially transitioned into his new role as a faculty member, effective May 1.

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NEW FACULTY – Xiaoxian (Bill) Li, M.D., Ph.D.

We went searching for a highly trained breast pathologist who is also a sophisticated molecular biologist, and we found the whole package in Xiaoxian (Bill) Li, MD, PhD. Born in China, Dr Li earned his M.D. at Beijing Medical University in 1997 and then spent the following ten years immersed in full-time laboratory investigation, first conducting Ph.D. thesis research on protein and membrane biochemistry at the University of Maryland in College Park, and then completing two successive research fellowships at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia (2002-05) and at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston (2005-07), where his research projects focused respectively on the p53 tumor suppressor protein and on breast cancer stem cells. His work during that time gave rise to a dozen scientific papers, more than half of them as first or co-first author, dealing with diverse topics related to membrane channels, apoptosis, cancer pathology, and molecular oncology. Dr Li then resumed his clinical training by completing an AP/CP residency at Methodist Hospital in Houston, and thereafter moved to the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center for a pair of yearlong clinical fellowships, the first on Oncologic Surgical Pathology, and the second on Breast Pathology, which he will finish in June. Dr Li, who plans to join us on August 1, will work mainly at EUH as an Assistant Professor and a leader of our subspecialty service in breast pathology, though he also aims to maintain his considerable skills as a general surgical pathologist. Given his exceptional background, we can look forward to the vital role Dr Li will play in advancing our clinical, training, and translational research programs, and particularly in applying new molecular test modalities for breast cancer diagnosis.

NEW FACULTY – Linsheng Zhang, M.D., Ph.D.

Molecular hematopathologist Linsheng Zhang, MD, PhD took a roundabout path to joining our Emory Pathology faculty, but he accomplished a tremendous amount along the way. By the time he emigrated from his native China in 1999, Dr Zhang had already earned his medical degree as well as a Master’s and a Ph.D., had completed residency in Internal Medicine and a clinical fellowship in Hematology, and had practiced for four years as an attending hematologist in a large urban teaching hospital in Chongqing. From there, his transit to Atlanta began with a series of research posts in Tokyo, Denver, Bethesda, and Baltimore, culminating in a four-year postdoctoral fellowship in Pediatric Oncology at Johns Hopkins, where his research focused on the molecular oncogenesis of acute myeloid leukemia. Dr Zhang then returned to clinical training, first completing a four-year AP/CP residency at the Medical University of South Carolina and then finally arriving at Emory, where he distinguished himself as a fellow in Hematopathology last year and is currently completing a fellowship in Molecular Genetic Pathology. With U.S. Board certifications in three sub-specialties and a fourth one looming, eighteen publications to his credit (thirteen as first author), and a great reputation in teaching, it’s no wonder he emerged as our top candidate in a highly competitive nationwide search. Come July, he joins our faculty as an Assistant Professor in the Hematopathology Section and as Associate Medical Director of the Molecular Diagnostics lab. An ideal outcome for Dr Zhang, and for our Department as well.

NEW FACULTY – Thomas Rogers, M.D.

Like so many great pathologists, Thomas Rogers, MD has wide-ranging interests and began his career by working as a clinical lab technician, a job that helped pay his way through medical school at the University of Texas in Galveston. Though he strayed for a few years into Internal Medicine, earning Board certification in that specialty at Baylor, he soon settled firmly back into Pathology and has remained ever since, beginning with two years of AP/CP residency at Baylor and two more (including a year as Chief Resident) at Brown. Dr Rogers then stayed at Brown for the first two years of his faculty career, but in 1992 moved to the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas where, over the course of the next two decades, he rose to the rank of Professor and honed his skills in the wide range of subspecialties that Pathology has to offer. Initially appointed at the Dallas VA Hospital, he practiced as a generalist in all facets of AP as well as in transfusion medicine, clinical chemistry, and hematopathology, and also served for two years as Acting Chief of Service there before moving to the University hospital in 2005, where he focused on renal, GI, and liver diseases in addition to general surgical pathology. His broad expertise is reflected in more than 50 papers and book chapters on a range of topics; in his contributions to a host of basic and clinical research projects on renal, liver, pulmonary, or metabolic disorders; and in his decades of service on institutional committees overseeing lab utilization, quality assurance, and curriculum development. Dr Rogers brought all of that invaluable experience with him when he joined our faculty in mid-April as an attending on the renal, GI, and clinical immunology services. If other needs arise, though, he’s ready to show us what a gifted generalist can do.

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Who Are Those Other New Pathologists?

We owe a special debt to several colleagues who’ve taken on new responsibilities on our AP diagnostic services over the past six months. **Matt Schniederjan, MD**, the chief pediatric neuropathologist at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA), joined our Emory neuropathology group on a part-time basis in December, 2012, bringing with him a gift for teaching and a treasure trove of pediatric cases that enrich our training program. Dr Schniederjan earned his credentials in AP, CP, and Neuropathology at Emory, and was a Chief Resident here in 2010. His CHOA colleagues, **Robert Garola, MD**, and **Hong (Julie) Yin, MD**, both of whom are experienced renal diagnosticians as well as pediatric surgical pathologists, have been providing vital backup coverage on our renal path service since January, 2013. Drs Garola, Schniederjan, and Yin are all members of our Adjunct Pathology faculty.

Caliendo Farewell Reception

On January 22, 2013, we bid farewell to Professor **Angela Caliendo, M.D., Ph.D.**, who served for more than a decade as Vice Chair for Clinical Pathology and Director of Emory Medical Labs. Residents, staff, faculty, and leadership from the hospitals and University came together to toast Dr Caliendo’s legacy and to wish her continued success in her new role as Vice Chair of Internal Medicine at Brown University (See page 5 for more photos).

New Leaders of USCAP

Two Emory Pathologists are now at the helm of the United States-Canadian Academy of Pathologists (USCAP), the largest organization of academic pathologists in North America. Last March, Professor and Vice Chair **Volkan Adsay, MD**, was elected to a 3-year term on the USCAP Council, which oversees all of the Academy’s activities. And fifth-year resident and former Chief Resident **Kevin Fisher, MD, PhD**, was appointed as one of two trainee representatives on the USCAP Education Committee, which organizes all educational programs, including the USCAP national meeting.

Left: Fifth-year resident Kevin Fisher, MD, PhD, and Professor and Vice Chair Volkan Adsay, MD
Photos from the Farewell Reception held 22 January 2013

A full-sized copy of this page--along with a PowerPoint presentation--is available on Blackboard in the Pathology Departmental Site, Photo Repository.

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