Emory Pathology Newsletter

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

Emory Pathology Ranked #2 for NIH Funding in 2012 (see Comment)

Newly released data show Emory as the #2 pathology department in the nation in terms of research funds received from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This is our Department’s highest ranking ever, and marks our fifth consecutive year among the top five pathology programs nationally. The rankings, compiled annually by the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research based on data provided by the NIH, took into account NIH research and training grants, but not contracts, for the 2012 federal fiscal year. Emory Pathology was credited with $31.7 million in NIH support, which made up roughly 54% of the $58 million in research support we received from all extramural sources last year. Three of our faculty were ranked among the top 20 NIH-funded principal investigators in Pathology departments nationwide last year: Professors Eric Hunter, Ph.D. (#3), Bali Pulendran, Ph.D. (#11), and Aftab Ansari, Ph.D. (#17). In all, 54 Pathology faculty and trainees held active grants from NIH or other agencies during 2012.

Comment: Special thanks to our outstanding Pathology grants-management team – Cathy Groen, Ed Becker, Belay Tekeste, Linnea Harwell, John Drago, Natalie Battles, Michele Kelly, and Bill Wolfinbarger – who expertly support what is now the second-largest departmental research portfolio at Emory.

Pathologists Lauded for Distinguished Publications and Grants (see Comment)

Six Pathology faculty were honored this year for publishing highly cited papers or for submitting grants deemed to be among the very best by their scientific peers. At a ceremony on October 11, hosted by Dean Thomas Lawley, M.D., and Associate Dean for Research Ray Dingleline, Ph.D., the following three pathologists were inducted into the Millipub Club, which was established four years ago to recognize Emory faculty authors of “citation classic” papers that have been cited at least 1,000 times: Professor Dan Brat, M.D., Ph.D., as an author of Nature 455:1061-1068, 2008, on the genomics and signaling pathways of glioblastoma; Professor David Lambeth, M.D., Ph.D., for a paper (Nature 401:79-82, 1999) on transforming activity of a Nox-family enzyme; and Professor Sharon Weiss, M.D., as an author of a landmark paper on gastrointestinal stromal tumors (Human Pathology 33:459-465, 2002).

The October ceremony also marked the debut of the Emory 1%, an honor society comprised of Emory investigators from any school who have ever submitted a grant application that scored in the top 1 percentile on peer review. Among the first 28 inductees to the Emory 1% were Professors Asma Nusrat, M.D., Ph.D., Chuck Parkos, M.D., Ph.D., and Perlasmamy Selvaraj, Ph.D., who were honored, respectively, for their outstanding NIH grants on intercellular junctions, leukocyte-epithelial interactions, and anti-cancer vaccines.

Comment: Read this and weep: Dr Nusrat’s is one of only six Emory grants identified thus far that have ever gotten a perfect score on peer review.

To contribute to the next newsletter, send an email to Donna Martin (dmart06@emory.edu).
NEW FACULTY – Alessandra C. Schmitt, M.D.

Our cytopathologists have been missing Dr. Alessandra Schmitt ever since she completed her fellowship here three years ago and moved away to join the faculty at Ohio State. So it’s a relief as well as a pleasure to announce that she will finally be rejoining us in mid-March as an Assistant Professor in our Anatomic Pathology (AP) Division. Born in Brazil, Dr. Schmitt completed medical school and a three-year AP residency in Porto Alegre, and also spent a year in Germany conducting pathology research at the Universities of Cologne and Freiberg before moving to the U.S. in 2005. She then completed a second three-year AP residency at the University of Iowa and a yearlong Surgical Pathology fellowship at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester. We recruited her into our Cytopathology fellowship the following year. Dr. Schmitt has broad interests and expertise in surgical and cytopathology, with a particular emphasis on head and neck and gynecological malignancies. While on the Ohio State faculty, she not only was active in those areas, but also took charge of the frozen section service, where she was credited with improving quality assurance and operations. She brings that wealth of experience and expertise with her as we welcome her back home to Emory. When you see all of the other cytopathologists smiling, you’ll know why.

CASE REPORTS –

Second-year resident Lauren Stuart, M.D., M.B.A., won first place in the “Duel in Dermatopathology” resident competition at the annual meeting of the American Society of Dermatopathology in Chicago last October. Her co-authors were Drs. Jerad Gardner, Scott Lauer, Doug Parker, and Mark Edgar from Pathology, along with sarcoma surgeon Dr. David Monson. Dr. Stuart’s acclaimed platform presentation dealt with epithelioid sarcoma-like hemangioendothelioma, an entity first described by our own Professor Sharon Weiss, M.D., and colleagues at Emory in 2003.

As he completed his three-year term on the Board of the American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACC) on January 1, Associate Professor David Koch, Ph.D., passed the torch to Associate Professor Corinne Fantz, Ph.D., whose term on that Board began the same day. The AACC is considered the leading professional organization for clinical chemists.

Newly installed in the lab of Professor Aftab Ansari, Ph.D., on WMB-2 is a 10-color flow cytometer. It was purchased jointly by the Department and Dr. Ansari, both to support his research on lentiviral immunopathogenesis and as a shared Departmental core facility, significantly expanding our capabilities in flow.

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Purple Reigns!

More than 80 athletes of the Inadequate Specimens team from Pathology and EML donned their fashionable grape T-shirts to participate in the Winship 5K fund-raiser this year. On a beautiful morning October 13, they ran, walked, or pushed strollers for a collective total of 250 miles to support cancer treatment and research. As these photos by Donna Martin prove, everyone had a great time for a great cause. We’ll do it again next year!
Holiday Cheer!

Staff, faculty, and trainees from EM and our Department dined and celebrated together at Pathology’s traditional holiday luncheon on December 12. Many thanks to Neil Raven for musical accompaniment, and to Corey Anderson for organizing this festive event.