

The NICHD Connection

Greetings and Welcome to the NICHD Fellows Committee

I am writing as an NICHD Fellows Committee founder, to welcome you and introduce our mission and goals. To maximize the Fellows Committee success, we would like to increase committee membership, and we encourage your participation. In particular, we would like to extend an invitation to clinical fellows, an underrepresented fellow population in our group.

The idea for the NICHD-FC arose during Dr Constantine Stratakis' first town hall meeting as Acting Scientific Director, when he outlined his vision to improve communications within the NICHD. I attended this meeting, and after talking with Dr Stratakis and Brenda Hanning, who directs the education office, we felt one solution would be to create a fellows committee. Our mission is to provide networking opportunities and facilitate communication among fellows. We are hoping to encourage this process at a grass-roots level, as well as enact formal communication across intramural NICHD.

To this end, we will organize social events, generate an NICHD newsletter, and maintain a fellows website. The website will be in the form of a wiki and will include a forum and links

to other NICHD fellow resources. NICHD is a diverse population of fellows with access to diverse equipment and skills; one question I often hear is "do you have a xenon ray cathode tube neutron accelerator gel gun thingamy, because we don't and we only need it for a little and it's so expensive." Therefore, we hope to foster a spirit of collaboration among fellows by providing an NICHD database of shareable, useful equipment as well as highly desired skills.

Join the NICHD fellows committee: one outcome may be to strengthen everyone's resume who becomes involved; but most importantly, we aim to make our experience as fellows better and more rewarding.

Best Regards,
Jason Riley

Committee:
Emily King, Kristofor Langlais, Elena Makareeva, Jason Riley, and Shana Spindler. Joined by our NICHD FELCOM reps, Kara Lukasiewicz and Angela Delaney,

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June 2010

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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the newly established NICHD monthly newsletter! Through this newsletter, we hope to deliver helpful and accurate information about career options, networking opportunities, social activities, exciting NICHD-sponsored research, mentorship, science policy, and important upcoming events. Examples of columns you can expect to see include "Hot Off the Press," popular science-style articles covering recently published research by NICHD fellows, and "Former Fellow Follow-up," interviews with fellow-alumni about career choices and job satisfaction. We always encourage innovative article ideas and welcome new contributors! If you would like to volunteer as a writer, please contact me at spindlersr@mail.nih.gov. We hope you enjoy the first issue and many more to come!

Your Editor-in-Chief,
Shana Spindler, PhD

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Check it out—June events!

If you are interested in attending any of the following events, please contact Brenda Hanning at HanningB@mail.nih.gov.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 9, 1-3 P.M.

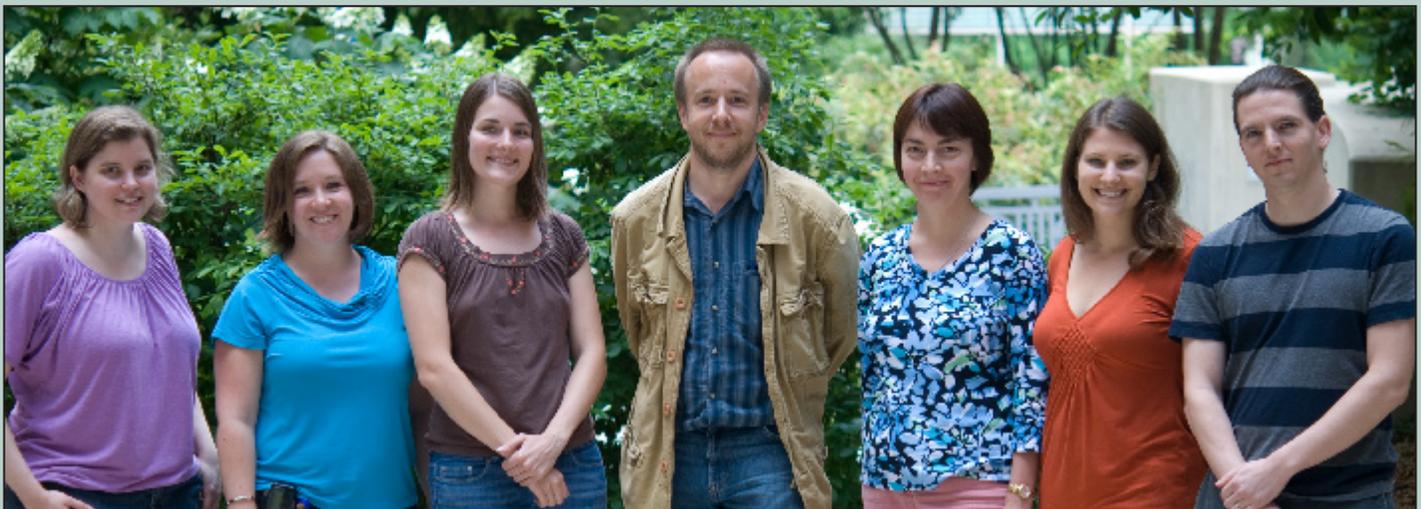
"Designing Informative Figures from Complex Data"
Led by Carolyn Ott, Ph.D.
(pre-registration required)

MONDAY, JUNE 21

Intro session OITE, 9-12pm
NICHD only, 2-5 p.m.
"Management in the Scientific Enterprise: Case Studies"
Timothy Quigg, Ph.D., University of North Carolina

NICHD Fellows Committee

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NICHD Fellows Committee Members, from left to right: Kara Lukasiewicz, Angela Delaney, Emily King, Jason Riley, Elena Makareeva, Shana Spindler, and Kristofor Langlais.

A Successful 2010 NICHD Retreat

By Shana Spindler

May 3, 2010 marked the start of the sixth annual NICHD retreat at the Airlie Center in Warrenton, Virginia. The meeting, organized by a dedicated group of fellows and graduate students, went off without a hitch.

The program began with an enlightening keynote address by Dr. Maria C. Freire, President of The Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation, discussing public-private partnerships fighting global health challenges. Using the TB (Tuberculosis) Alliance as an example, Dr. Freire stressed that a successful public-private partnership exemplifies three key factors: innovation, collaboration, and resource mobilization.

The keynote address was followed by an outstanding—not to mention organic—dinner and the first poster session, where fellows and graduate students entertained the chance to share their latest research goals and discoveries. Perhaps the most important networking session at the retreat, socializing at the Whistling Swan Pub, capped the end of a lively first day.

For the brave few who dawned their morning with the 6:30am sun, day two began with a professionally led bird-watching and nature walk around the fields and ponds of the Airlie Center. For the rest of the sleep-loving fellows, the first session of the morning offered a few remarks from Acting Scientific Director Dr. Constantine Stratakis and Acting Director Dr. Alan Guttmacher, complete with words of encouragement and a bright outlook for the future.

To round out the morning, Dr. Owen M. Rennert delivered an informa-



Jana Kainerstorfer (left) and Melissa Crocker (right) discuss their posters with Drs. Guttmacher and Stratakis.

tive lecture about the genetic basis of autism spectrum disorder and his proposal to generate induced pluripotent stem cells from autistic patients to study autism-related neurophysiology in cell culture conditions. Dr. Rennert's selfless devotion to the field was captured in his final statement: "So, that's just what an old man is trying to do." Dr. Harry A. Burgess concluded the morning session with an exciting look at neural circuitry and motor control in Zebrafish larvae, a powerful model organism that combines the genetic appeal of fruit flies with a transparent vertebrate anatomy.

All before lunch, the fellows presented at a second poster session and attended Tuesday's keynote address, "Biological Visualization Using Hollywood's Tools." Dr. Gaël McGill, Direc-

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2010 NICHD Retreat

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Dr. Gaël McGill gives Tuesday's keynote address.

tor of Molecular Visualization at Harvard University and President and CEO of Digizyme Inc, displayed colorful representations of biological and physical processes, created using the advanced graphic software Maya. He explained that his visual models will not only help with science education, but can also serve as a tool during innovative experimental design. To learn more about his work, visit <http://www.molecularmovies.org>.

The day wrapped up with two more sessions. First, fellows enjoyed an hour of Career Q&A round-table discussions in which fellows received real-time answers from scientists in a variety of fields such as consulting, private sector research, and science policy, among others. Last but not least, the final session included six fellow presentations ranging from social buffering in rhesus monkeys to the role of collagens in carcinomas.

The retreat concluded with a big thank you to everyone who helped organize and support this year's event, especially Kara Lukasiewicz, chair of the retreat steering committee. Thanks to all of the fellows who attended and made the 2010 retreat a great success!

Celebrating Our Postbacs

By Elena Makareeva

On May 12th, 13 brave postbaccalaureate fellows from the NICHD intramural program presented their posters at the NIH Spring Research Festival. Presenters shared their projects with other attendees and competed for "best poster" awards in a lively atmosphere of scientific discussion.

Brenda Hanning, Director of the Office of Education for the Division of Intramural Research, recruited 12 post-doctoral fellows and graduate students to judge posters. As a judge, I enjoyed learning about the diverse research conducted in our institute, such as methylation during spermatogenesis, Adaptor Protein Complex involvement during protein sorting, mouse models of cardiac arrhythmias, and depression in immigrant and US-born mothers.

Each judge attended at least four to five posters and asked presenters to describe their projects. While most judges were unfamiliar with the presenter's field—stemming from the broad research spectrum conducted in our institute—the postbaccalaureate fellows used their poster presenting skills to highlight the importance and quality of their research. The critical criteria during the judging process included the following:

- Fellow's knowledge and grasp of the lab's research
- Fellow's ability to describe the project clearly and succinctly
- Design and layout of the poster, highlighting hypothesis-driven questions

Prior to choosing three winners, the judges participated in a thorough discussion about each project. Deciding upon three finalists was difficult, but everyone agreed that the NICHD postbacs are among the brightest young scientists.

The finalists for postbac "best poster" awards were Amanda Crawford (preceptor Dr. Richard Maraia), Michelle Dail (preceptor Dr. D. Forbes Porter), and Cameron Johnson (preceptor Dr. Karl Pfeifer). As a gift, each winner received *The Language of Life*, autographed by author Dr. Francis Collins, the NIH director.

I highly encourage every postbac to participate in the NIH Spring Research Festival next year!



Congratulations to the 2010 NICHD Mentor of the Year winners!

Postdoctoral Fellow Mentor of the Year: Errett Hobbs, Ph.D.

Pl. Mentor of the Year: Ramanujan "Manu" Hegde, M.D., Ph.D.



