Emory Pathologists Chart a Path To Better Tissue Banking

The National Cancer Institute has chosen Emory as one of four institutions that will determine optimal methods of harvesting, stabilizing, and archiving human tissues for research. High-quality collections of tissues, called biobanks, are critical for enabling scientists to understand the molecular changes that give rise to cancer or other diseases and how they respond to treatment. Yet studies suggest that fewer than one in three specimens in biobanks nationwide may be suitable for advanced genomic or proteomic studies. With support of a new 2-year, $600,000 contract from the NCI’s Cancer Human Biobank (caHUB) initiative, a team of Emory researchers, led by Assistant Professor and Georgia Research Alliance Cancer Scholar Gabriel Sica, M.D., Ph.D., is initially tasked with evaluating how particular collection and storage procedures affect the molecular profiles of adenocarcinoma specimens from the lung, kidney, ovary, and colon. Human Tissue Procurement Manager Charles Butler and Clinical Research Coordinator Tiffany Little lead the staff who are spearheading this important effort. In addition to assembling a valuable new collection of specimens at Emory, each with data on more than 300 clinical and storage characteristics, their work will provide rigorous, evidence-based procedures and guidelines for biobanking that could be adopted nationwide.

A Stellar ACLPS (see Comment)

More than 180 faculty and trainees from across the country took part as Emory Pathology hosted the 48th national meeting of the Academy of Clinical Laboratory Physicians and Scientists (ACLPS) in early June. The three-day conference, held in downtown Decatur, focused on the theme of global health, featuring speakers from Emory’s Rollins School of Public Health and other institutions, and culminated with a gala evening at the World of Coke. Thirteen Emory trainees showed posters or gave platform presentations describing their studies on a range of topics in laboratory medicine, with resident Cliff Sullivan, M.D., as well as clinical fellows Vickie El-Najjar, M.D., Jaime Noguez, Ph.D., and Sean Stowell, M.D., Ph.D., taking home Young Investigator Awards in honor of their research.

Comment: The ACLPS meeting was a great success in showcasing the remarkable strengths of academic laboratory medicine at Emory. Thanks to the organizing committee and to all the other faculty, staff, and trainees who contributed. For more of Donna Martin’s photos of this event, see page 4.

To contribute to the next newsletter, send an email to Donna Martin (dmart06@emory.edu).
The Emory Personalized Immunotherapy Center (EPIC) reached a major landmark on March 11, when a batch of autologous human mesenchymal stem cells it had prepared was infused for the first time into a patient as part of an experimental treatment for inflammatory bowel disease. A second infusion was performed on September 5. A joint effort of Pathology and Hematology/Oncology, funding by Emory Healthcare, EPIC uses sophisticated facilities in the Emory Blood Bank to grow these immunosuppressive cells under conditions suitable for therapeutic use in humans. Future clinical trials are planned for graft-versus-host disease and other immune-mediated disorders.

September 2013

CASE REPORTS

Two eminent Emory Pathologists carried home well-deserved mentorship awards from national organizations recently. Professor and Georgia Research Alliance Eminent Scholar Max Cooper, M.D., received the Excellence in Mentorship Award from the American Association of Immunologists at their annual meeting in Boston in May of last year. And the US-Canadian Academy of Pathologists bestowed its Harvey Goldman Mentorship Award on Professor and Associate Dean Sharon Weiss, M.D., at its 2013 meeting in Baltimore last March.

Professor Volkan Adsay, M.D., was part of a cadre of pathologists and translational researchers who shared the Team Science Award from the American Association for Cancer Research at its January 2013 national meeting in Washington DC. This elite, multi-institutional team was honored for its groundbreaking research on pancreatic cancer. Dr Adsay is Vice Chair and Director of our Division of Anatomic Pathology.

Professor Max D. Cooper, MD, and Sharon W. Weiss, MD

The Winning Team: Dr Adsay (blue arrow) with colleagues from Johns Hopkins and Memorial Sloan-Kettering, including Drs David Klimstra, Ralph Hruban, and Bert Vogelstein (open arrows, left to right).

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On July 1, we proudly launched our new ACGME-certified clinical fellowship in Pediatric Pathology, a joint effort of pathologists at Emory and Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta under the leadership of Professors Beverly Rogers, M.D. and Carlos Abramowsky, M.D. We’re especially proud that its first fellow is our own outstanding ex-resident and ex-Chief Resident, Shelley Caltharp, M.D.
A dazzling photomicrograph by Professor William Lewis, M.D., was among the winners of the second annual BioArt competition of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB). Dr Lewis, a cardiac pathologist and investigator, captured the image of amyloid deposits in a myocardial biopsy under polarized light in the course of his clinical duties. It will be exhibited along with other winning photos and videos on the NIH’s main campus in Bethesda.

Sometimes, a simple “thank you” just won’t suffice: When Professor Whit Sewell, M.D., wrapped up his final lecture to this year’s second-year medical class in August, they gave him a thunderous standing ovation, held up placards reading “We Love You, Dr Sewell”, and posed for a group photo with this extraordinary teacher who’s still wowing ‘em after all these years.

Want to get some exercise, improve healthcare, and show off your Emory Pathology pride – all at the same time? You’ll have two chances to do all of those things on Saturday, October 5:

- Join with other Pathology staff, trainees, faculty, friends and families in the third annual Winship 5K, a fun and invigorating run, walk, or stroll to raise money for cancer research and care.

  Sign up in advance for Pathology’s intrepid 5K team, the “Inadequate Specimens”, and receive a free T-shirt. We’ll assemble at McDonough Field for an 8:30 AM start time. For details, log on to www.winship5k.emory.edu or contact team captain Dan Brat, M.D., Ph.D.

- October 5 is also the go-live day for the new PathNet Millennium lab-information system. So if you are a Pathology or Emory Healthcare employee, please volunteer to help in the laboratories as they make the transition. No special training needed, and T-shirts will be provided. For details, contact Clinical Chemistry fellow Emily Lu Ryan, Ph.D., or Pathology Informatics Director Alexis Carter, M.D.
Photos from the ACLPS Conference held in Decatur, Georgia in early June, 2013. Individual images will be available on Blackboard in the Pathology Departmental Site, Photo Repository.

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