Pathologists Lead Major Emory Research Consortium Aimed at HIV/AIDS Vaccine and Cure

A multidisciplinary team of Emory pathologists and other investigators has been awarded a 5-year, $35.6-million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to develop innovative strategies for preventing and curing HIV disease. Known as the Emory Consortium for Innovative AIDS Research in Non-Human Primates, the team is led by Professor of Pathology Eric Hunter, Ph.D., together with his co-Principal Investigator, Professor Rama Amara, Ph.D., of Microbiology and Immunology. It brings together experts from the Schools of Medicine and Public Health, the Yerkes National Primate Research Center, and collaborating institutions elsewhere, with the goals of creating advanced adjuvanted vaccines that confer long-lasting protection from HIV infection, and of discovering ways to purge the virus from latent reservoirs in people who are already infected. The researchers will focus their work on simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV) and SIV/HIV hybrid viruses, using the unique resources of Yerkes, Emory’s Center for AIDS Research, and the Emory Vaccine Center. Among the 13 participating Emory faculty, nearly half are members of our Pathology Department, including (in addition to Dr. Hunter) Professors Max Cooper, M.D., Cynthia Derdeyn, Ph.D., and Guido Silvestri, M.D.; Candler Professor Bali Pulendran, Ph.D.; and Assistant Professor Mirko Paiardini, Ph.D. Drs. Cooper, Hunter, and Silvestri are all Eminent Scholars of the Georgia Research Alliance.

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Emory Pathology Ranked Again Among the Top 5 for NIH Funding Nationally

With investigators like that, you might guess that Emory Pathology is a research powerhouse. You’d be right. Here’s more proof: The latest data on research funding by the NIH show that Emory Pathology ranked #4 among departments of its kind nationwide during the 2015 federal fiscal year, which ended on September 30. With $31.3 million in NIH funding, Emory was outpaced only by Johns Hopkins, the University of Pennsylvania, and Washington University in St. Louis last year. We have now ranked among the top 5 Pathology departments nationally for seven consecutive years. The rankings are compiled each year by the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research, using data released by the NIH. Pathology was the top NIH-ranked department in the Emory School of Medicine, which itself ranked 17th by this criterion among U.S. medical schools, with nearly $234 million in NIH funding. All told, 45 Emory Pathology faculty and trainees attracted a total of $49,966,475 in combined grants, contracts, and fellowships from all extramural sources during fiscal 2015.

To contribute to the next newsletter, send an email to Donna Martin (dmart06@emory.edu).
Pediatricians make great pathologists. They’ve proven that to us several times already, so it won’t come as a surprise when our latest recruit turns out to be spectacularly successful, too. **Margo Rollins, M.D.,** joined Emory Pathology as an Assistant Professor on July 1, just days after finishing her training, but she didn’t follow the conventional route. She arrived instead as a Board-certified and subspecialty-trained Pediatrician, who went from medical school at Rush University into three years of General Pediatrics residency at Duke, followed that with three more years of Pediatric Hematology-Oncology fellowship at Emory, and then capped it all off with our yearlong fellowship in Transfusion Medicine. That path makes perfect sense when you consider that Dr. Rollins’s true passion lies in caring for patients with sickle-cell disease, whose frequent transfusions and attendant complications can best be managed by doctors with sophisticated knowledge of blood banking, immunology, hematology, and clinical practice. Her commitment is apparent in the time she’s spent volunteering at sickle-cell summer camps and education events, as well as in the research she conducted during her fellowship, which used endothelialized, variable-shear microfluidic devices to model platelet interactions and the sudden, painful vaso-occlusive events that underlie sickle-cell crisis. Dr. Rollins will bring all of that passion and training to bear as a member of our Clinical Pathology faculty and our Center for Transfusion and Cellular Therapies, particularly in her new role as Assistant Medical Director of the Blood Bank and Apheresis services at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta. We look forward to all that she’ll contribute to her patients and our Department, and we join in wishing her great success as an Emory Pathologist!

A lifelong dream came true for Professor **Guy Benian, M.D.,** on March 23 when he performed a program of Brahms and Beethoven with the Vega string quartet at Emory’s Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts. A gifted pianist as well as a gifted cell biologist and teacher, Dr. Benian had won a raffle that entitled him to a private concert by Emory’s own chamber group in residence. By asking instead to accompany them live on the public stage in this beautiful auditorium, he turned it into a win for us all.

To listen to the audio portion of the concert, log into Blackboard ([www.classes.emory.edu](http://www.classes.emory.edu)). Select ‘Pathology Departmental Site’, then ‘Activities’ where you will find the folder with the audio files. If you have trouble accessing Blackboard, email dmart06@emory.edu.

**New Faculty—Margo Rollins, MD**

**Case Reports**

**Mentorship Facilitators:** Jeannette Guarner, MD; Adeboye Osunkoya, MD; Dan Brat, MD, PhD

**Professor and Vice Chair Dan Brat, M.D., Ph.D.,** Professor Jeannette Guarner, M.D., and Associate Professor Adeboye Osunkoya, M.D. have accepted appointment as our Department’s first-ever team of Mentorship Facilitators. In this new role, which was conceived by the Department’s Mentorship Working Group back in 2011, the trio will serve as a first point of contact to assess individual faculty needs, help match aspiring mentors and mentees to ensure those needs are met, orient junior faculty to the career-development resources available, and foster and reward effective mentorship in Pathology. Their doors are open, and interested faculty are encouraged to contact them for assistance or advice.

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The 18,000-member College of American Pathologists honored Associate Professor Charlie Hill, M.D., Ph.D., with its 2015 Distinguished Patient Care Award at its national meeting in Nashville in early October.

The award applauds Dr. Hill’s "mentorship, knowledge, and service to pathology and his patients," particularly for his leadership in providing diagnostic lab testing for the four Ebola patients who were treated in Emory’s high-containment facility during 2014. Dr. Hill is the Medical Director of our Molecular Diagnostics clinical laboratory and also directs our renowned Residency Program in Pathology.

In March, Emory’s Molecular Diagnostics laboratory became the first lab in Georgia, and one of the first in the U.S., authorized to perform clinical or environmental testing for Zika virus by the Centers for Disease Control. The test developed at Emory, which detects and quantifies viral RNA, has so far been used in 30 individuals, four of whom, including two pregnant women, were found to be infected. Molecular Genetic Pathology fellow Matt Feldhammer, Ph.D., spearheaded the validation and implementation of this new test.

We’re doing molecular diagnostics on the other side of the globe, too: The diagnostic lab operated by Professor Susan Allen, M.D., M.P.H., and her team in Lusaka, Zambia, has recently installed a GeneXpert analyzer, enabling them to offer fast, affordable nucleic-acid-based testing for acute HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases, to support the work of her Zambia-Emory HIV Research Program there.

Professor Volkan Adsay, M.D., is the President of the United States and Canadian Academy of Pathology (USCAP), the premier organization for academic anatomic pathologists in North America. His year-long term began last April. Dr. Adsay, a renowned expert on pancreatobiliary pathology, is also our Vice Chair and Division Director for Anatomic Pathology.

The Vector: Aedes aegypti

Photo Source: CDC Image Database

Consulting the Xpert: Allen lab members (from left) Namukolo Siyumbwa, Nyundiwe Tembo, Towela Mfune, Dayna Clark, Clive Michelo, and Sydney Kampamba, with the new instrument.
Newly Promoted Faculty

Four more Pathology faculty advanced to senior ranks at the start of this academic year. **Alton Brad Farris III, M.D.,** is our Director of Nephropathology as well as an expert in gastrointestinal, hepatobiliary, and transplant pathology; **Marla Gearing, Ph.D.,** is a neuromorphologist with research and diagnostic expertise in neurodegenerative diseases and a lung clinic of Alzheimer’s disease research at Emory; and **Gabriel Sica, M.D., Ph.D.,** is a versatile surgical pathologist subspecializing in the lung who is also a local and national leader in tissue banking. All three are now Associate Professors. To top it off, **Shiyong Li, M.D., Ph.D.,** our quadru-Blad-certified Director of Hematopathology and luminary on the molecular diagnostics of hematologic cancers, is now a full Professor. Congratulations to this entire group! All told, 55 members of our Department have garnered 64 promotions or new appointments to the ranks of Associate Professor or Professor (or both!) so far, since August 2003.

Interesting Links

**Pathologists in the News**

**Sean Stowell**

Health Sciences Update—March 29, 2016
Sheep versus wolves: Potential new class of targeted antibiotics

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYSFypiZFLO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYSFypiZFLO)

**Daniel Brat**

Brat Grant to Focus on Low-Grade Gliomas
Winship Roundup—April 15, 2016

**Carlos Moreno**

Winship Cancer Institute—April 22, 2016
Sanda to lead multi-center prostate cancer biomarker study

**Daniel Brat**

New Website
Human Tissue Procurement Service (HTPS)
- [https://winshipcancer.emory.edu/htps/](https://winshipcancer.emory.edu/htps/)

**Eric Hunter**

Rollins Emory Public Health
Getting to zero—Experts weigh in on what it will take to end the AIDS epidemic

**Periasamy Selvaraj**

Atlanta Business Chronicle—July 20, 2016
Emory, Metacclipse Therapeutics get $2.4 million grant for breast cancer vaccine

Eminent forensic pathologist Professor **Randy Hanzlick, M.D.,** retired in early June after 25 years on our Pathology faculty, the final 18 of them as Fulton County’s Chief Medical Examiner. A past President of the National Association of Medical Examiners, he received the 2007 Life Service Award and 2014 Milton Helpern Laureate Award from that organization; is a Distinguished Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences; served on blue-ribbon advisory groups for the CDC, the U.S. Department of Justice, and other agencies; and since 1998 directed our clinical fellowship program in Forensic Pathology, in which he himself had trained. We’ll miss his limericks, too.
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