Dear Faculty, Trainees, Staff and Students:

Once again I want to thank all of you for working hard to achieve your goals. Your contributions to the work produced by the Department of Pathology is reflective in the number of papers published, grants received, revenue obtained and services provided. Without your dedication and resourcefulness we would not have achieved the many accolades that we have over the past academic year. To name a few, we ranked first in the country for abstracts submitted and accepted by residents for the prestigious Stowell-Orbison Awards Competition for pathologists-in-training for the 2007 Annual USCAP meeting to be held in San Diego, CA. Our Department ranked fourth in the nation for Research Grants from the NIH.

We also welcomed new leadership for the upcoming academic year; for the Residency Program, Dr. Trevor Macpherson and for the graduate program, Dr. Wendy Mars. They are enthusiastic about their new roles and I am confident that our training programs will reach new heights under their leadership.

We also welcomed new staff to the administrative office, Ms. Mary Lou Benedetti, who accepted the position as Assistant Administrator. She comes to us with a wealth of knowledge regarding the University as she previously held the position of Administrator in the Department of Molecular Genetics and Biochemistry. We also welcomed Candace Smigla as the Administrator for the Center of ALS, Directed by Dr. Robert Bowser.

I want to take this opportunity to thank each of you and encourage you to continue to work hard to achieve your goals. My door is open to all who wish to discuss future career objectives and ideas.

Best wishes for a happy holiday and a happy new year.

Sincerely yours,

George K. Michalopoulos, M.D., Ph.D.
Professor and Chairman Department of Pathology
Be true to your work, your word, and your friends.

Henry David Thoreau
US Transcendentalist author (1817 - 1862)

Dr. Tim Oury of the Department of Pathology was selected as runner-up for the 2006-2007 BGSA Distinguished Mentor Award. His graduate student, Michelle Manni, nominated him for this award, stating that Dr. Oury is an exceptional mentor through his dedication to advancing the professional development of his trainees. Former post-doctoral and graduate student trainees, Cheryl Fattman, Roderick Tan, and Lana Hanford and current post-doctoral trainee, Fei Gao, wrote letters of support along with other faculty familiar with his highly interactive teaching style. Many letters of support commented on Dr. Oury’s dedication as a mentor and noted that he is constantly challenging all of his trainees, which hones their critical thinking skills and prepares them for careers as independent investigators. While being actively involved in the work going on in his lab, Dr. Oury’s mentoring style fosters a supportive, close-knit lab group that is destined to excel. He transmits to his students and trainees by example and encouragement his irrepressible excitement about science and the mental resourcefulness needed to pursue a research career. He was honored along with Dr. Paul Kinchington at the BGSA Symposium on October 18 for his excellence and commitment to graduate education, through research training, teaching, and administrative service.

Dr. Xiao-Ming Yin has been invited to join the Hepatology Editorial Board for the period of Jan 2007 to Dec 2011. He also assumed responsibility for the Division of Molecular Diagnostics as Assistant Director.

Dr Minh-Ha Tran received passed his subspecialty exam in Blood Bank/Transfusion Medicine.

Jeffrey A. Kant MD PhD, Professor and Division Director, Division of Molecular Diagnostics, was an invited participant to the National Genetic Policy Summit in Washington DC September 20-22 which brought together ~100 individuals spanning the breadth of lay, academic, NGO, and government stakeholders in this increasingly crucial field of medicine.

Dr. Kant organized and will participate in a workshop on Reimbursement issues in Molecular Diagnostics at the 11th Annual Meeting of the Association for Molecular Pathology (AMP) November 16-19 in Orlando, Florida. Dr. Kant was also elected Program Chair-elect for AMP this past summer.

Dr. Kant was recently named to the Molecular Pathology Workgroup of the Council for Government and Professional Affairs, College of American Pathologists (CAP). The Workgroup is responsible for advising and alerting CAP to important clinical, regulatory and economic issues that affect the practice of Molecular Pathology.

Holiday Office Coverage

Please note the administrative offices will be open over the holiday break 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

University and UPMC closed Monday, January 15, 2007 in observation of Martin Luther King day.
PRESENTATIONS


Dr Mark Yazer presented the "Pittsburgh model for centralized transfusion services" at an international blood bank meeting in London, England on November 13, 2006.

Dr. George Michalopoulos presented “Gene Expression Patterns in HCCs and Hepatoblastomas: Opportunities for Diagnostic and Therapeutic Targets,” at the 2nd International Symposium on Diagnosis and Treatment of Liver Disease—Hepatocellular Carcinoma: Advances in Diagnosis and Treatment,” October 14, 2006 in Palermo Italy.

Dr. Sara Monaghan recently accepted the invitation to serve on the Hematopathology CheckPath Committee for the for the American Society of Clinical Pathology. Checkpath is a competency assessment program that measures the diagnostic skills of it’s subscribers by providing cases accompanied by glass slides, images and lab data. Subscribers include pathologists and medical technologists. As a member of the committee, Dr. Monaghan will provide and review cases for inclusion in the program, author discussion and review participant responses.
Dr. Steven H. Swerdlow, Director of the Division of Hematopathology, presented “The ABC’s of making hematopathologic diagnoses in 2006”, “Diagnostic/prognostic decision making and the small B-cell lymphomas”, “MALT-a diagnostic challenge at varied sites”, “Dealing with the diffuse large cell lymphomas and their mimics” and “Diagnosing and classifying Hodgkin lymphomas today” at the Scientific Symposium Course, in Maui, Hawaii, in July 2006.

He delivered the Shields Warren Lecture on “Ongoing Lessons from the Small B-Cell Lymphomas” to the New England Pathology Society in Boston on September 12 and was a Visiting Professor at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston on September 13, 2006. He participated in two symposia at the International Academy of Pathology in September, 2006 in Montreal, Canada as a moderator for the Symposium “The role of infectious agents in B-cell lymphomas”, and gave two lectures: “Low Grade Cutaneous B-cell Lymphomas: Similarities and Differences with Nodal Counterparts” and “Epstein Barr Virus (EBV) and lymphoproliferative disorders in the immunocompromised host.”

Dr. Swerdlow helped organize the October 2006 EAHP Meeting in Vienna, Austria as a member of the International Scientific Committee and Panel Member for the Slide Workshop on “Small B-cell proliferations including plasmacytomas.” He spoke on “Is lymphoplasmacytic lymphoma an entity?” moderated a session and presented a case at the Slide Workshop.

Coming up in December, Dr. Swerdlow will be giving a Procter and Gamble basic Science Lecture at the University of Cincinnati in Cincinnati, Ohio entitled “Update on Cutaneous lymphomas - The New WHO/EORTC Classification and More.”

Dr. Larry Nichols presented: “Can you make the diagnosis before the patient dies?” at the Case Presentations of E.D. cases that ended up on the autopsy table. December 5, 2006, 7:30 pm.

2006 CAP Foundation Rippey Grants for Quality Assurance Awarded

In August, three research projects were approved to receive funding from the CAP Foundation John H. Rippey Fund for Laboratory Quality Assurance. The Rippey Grant supports innovative projects related to quality assurance, quality improvement in pathology, or patient safety resulting in improved patient care. Funded researchers and their projects included: Anil V. Parwani, MD, PhD, UPMC Shadyside Hospital. An $8,000 grant for “Analysis of a standardized pathology reporting process based on CAP protocols and checklists.”
RESIDENCY PROGRAM UPDATE

First, I would like to thank the faculty, Rotation Directors, Fellowship Directors, Chiefs of Service, Chief Residents, Residents and Fellows for their support as I assume the role of Program Director.

Our focus is currently on recruitment of the Resident Class of 2008 and to date we have interviewed 23 candidates with at least as many being scheduled through mid-January. The quality of applicants is very high - many with MD PhD. We anticipate recruiting for 7 positions this year. A special thank you to faculty who have volunteered to be part of the interview team.

For several months we have had Brandon Thompson as temporary help in the office while Trish Zrimsek – Academic Manager - recruits for an assistant as Academic Support Coordinator.

I am meeting with the residents in small groups and monthly with the Chief Residents. As a result of these meetings and that of the Residents Committee we are addressing several important issues including: a) the evaluation process, b) development of a more structured ‘didactic’ curriculum, c) more elective rotation time, d) addition of several social events, e) criteria for selection of residents into our program, and f) enhancement of Patient Safety education and experience. Several of these issues will be handled via a Residency Committee Sub-Committee format.

In the new year I plan to begin to meet with Fellowship Directors to identify areas of improvement in our support of the Fellowship Programs.

Residency and Fellowship Programs.
Trevor Macpherson MD
Program Director

Recently I met with Steve Kanter MD, Senior Associate Dean and his Strategic Planning Group to discuss medical student pathology education. We have decided to prepare a Pathology Education Plan for the 4 years of medical school — much of which will probably be enhancement of existing activities. To that end a Pathology Medical School Education Committee is being formed to include medical students, residents and faculty. Our first task will be to gather information on existing pathology education activity and participation and then consider how this can be enhanced.

Medical School Pathology Education
Trevor Macpherson MD
Director Pathology Education

The Pathology Medical School Interest Group is being revitalized among the current 11 students across MS 2 to MS 4 and their first activity will be to recruit MS 1 members. The group will be formally constitutes as a student organization under the Student Executive Committee. The purpose of this group will be to provide information and experience of pathology as a medical career and to expose students to the role of pathology in patient care. Regular luncheons are planned with some residents and faculty members. A meeting with two members has identified several ideas to enhance the pathology experience of medical students. This group will also identify two medical students to be part of the Pathology Medical School Education Committee.

Pathology Medical Student Interest Group
Trevor Macpherson MD
Director Pathology Education
The MSTP summer Molecular Medicine Course was the inaugural year for 2006. This course met twice a week for twelve weeks, an hour and a half each Tuesday and Thursday evening. Each week, a different graduate program had the opportunity to summarize their field and was asked to present a paper with medical implications that exemplified their discipline. Graduate programs got the opportunity to showcase their training program and faculty, while the students got the opportunity to consider potential rotations for future years.

Course format was loose for the first year permitting a free running experiment of what formats of presentation and interaction were best received and most productive. There was universal student enthusiasm for the tightly orchestrated classic Bench to Bedside format that took high tech molecular studies all the way to patient symptoms and therapy. Feedback from the faculty was equally positive and emphasized the need for better common background reading to bring this group of incoming students to high level appreciation of cutting edge developments. Next year we will implement the suggested organizational changes in a more uniform fashion so that students and faculty have clear expectations. Graduate programs like pathology are particularly well positioned to attract MSTP students by focusing on training and opportunities for physician scientists. Next year in addition to the organizational changes, the course will be condensed from twelve to eight weeks, limiting the number of graduate programs that can participate.

Clayton Wiley, M.D., Ph.D.
Associate Dean, Director of MSTP

As your newly appointed director of the Cellular and Molecular Pathology (CMP) graduate program, I look forward to utilizing the Pathology Newsletter as one means to keep everyone informed on what is going on both within CMP and the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine (UPSOM) graduate programs in general. My hope is that in order to better serve us all, during my tenure I will be able to promote open communication channels between our faculty and all aspects of graduate education within both Pathology and UPSOM. As a first step towards this (somewhat lofty!) goal, I have decided to resurrect the CMP steering committee. In part, this committee will serve as a sounding board for your questions/suggestions so that formal recommendations can be taken to the CMP faculty regarding issues such as curriculum and/or protocol changes. It will also serve as a means to take your thoughts and recommendations back to the UPSOM graduate council for their consideration. The committee is currently composed of the Pathology faculty who represent educational programs within the CMP branch of UPSOM. It consists of Paul Monga, our CMP recruiting representative; Shiyuan Cheng, our CMP admissions representative; Cris Achim, co-director of the Pathology Post-doctoral Research Training Program (PPRTP); Tim Oury, co-director of the Pathologist Investigator Residency Training (PIRT) program, George Michalopoulos, Department Chair; and myself.

If you are interested in having issues brought before the CMP steering committee, please share them with our CMP administrator, Shari Tipton (tiptonsl@upmc.edu), or me (wmars@pitt.edu). Also, I would love to know if you are aware of any outstanding faculty members who are not currently members of CMP but who would be eligible and have a possible interest in joining our program.

Thanks so much!

Wendy M. Mars, Ph.D.
Director, Pathology SURP and CMP graduate program
Once again, the Pathology arm of the Summer Undergraduate Research Program (P-SURP) is looking for faculty who are willing to sponsor college undergraduates in their laboratories for a 10-week scientific research experience this coming summer. This is a highly competitive outreach program, specifically designed to recruit high-quality students into applying for graduate degrees through the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine (UPSOM) programs such as the Interdisciplinary Biomedical Graduate Program and the Medical School.

In Pathology, we have been especially successful in meeting this goal as ~25% of P-SURP students from the years 2000-2005 entered UPSOM graduate programs and even though it is early in the application process, ~45% of the 2006 P-SURP seniors have applied to UPSOM programs already! Clearly we are doing something right.

The specifics of the program are as follows:

The cost to the individual investigator is $3500.00. This year, there will also be competitive supplemental funding for three members of UPCI and possibly a stipend from UPSOM. Please contact me at 412-648-9690 or wmars@pitt.edu if you are interested in learning more about these funding opportunities.

The program will run from May 29-August 3. Students are expected to have a specific project that they work on full time. They are also expected to attend supplemental programming 1-2 hours a week. At the end of the experience they must write an abstract and do a 10-minute power point presentation of their work.

Due to our continuing success, funds to be used for student housing and travel will once again be provided as a generous gift from Dr. Levine.

I would like to stress that the success of this program relies on quality mentors as well as quality students. Part of our tremendous success has been due to participation of interested faculty such as you. In addition, we have implemented several techniques designed to attract the highest quality students to our program such as a shared online application process. I would venture that many of you who have participated as SURP mentors in the past can attest to the quality of the students that we are attracting.

If you have any questions or are willing to be a mentor this year, please contact me at 412-648-9690, or via e-mail at wmars@pitt.edu. The application process has already begun.

Thanks so much!

Wendy M. Mars, Ph.D.
Director, Pathology SURP and CMP graduate program


F Koc, S Kargi, AW Biglan, CT Chu & JS Davis. The aetiology in pediatric aphakic glaucoma. Eye, In press. (Published online 11Nov2005)


ME Couce, R Medina-Flores, M Wong & CT Chu. Occult germ cell tumor presenting as spontaneous intracerebral hemorrhage. Histopathol, in press.
Chunsun Dai and Xiao Yan Lu (left) and Yu Yang and Xin Xe (right) both couples recently welcomed healthy baby boys.

Carl Taylor returns after serving in Iraq with the Army. Thank you Carl and welcome back.

Sue Kelly, (left) and Diana Winters (middle) having fun on Halloween

Halloween bash at the Office!

Too much food again.... Getting ready for the sugar high!