PASPCR

April 2010
Vol. **18** Number **1**

Newsletter

The **PASPCR** ***Newsletter*** is published three times a year and is intended to serve as a regular means of communication for the members of our Society. The PASPCR Newsletter is distributed via e-mail, in pdf format, on the first of April, August and December and it will continue to be posted on the web site of the Society.

Preparations for the 16th Annual Meeting of the PASPCR, spear-headed by Youwen Zhou are progressing well. The meeting will be held in Vancouver, Canada on September 30 - October 2, 2010. Further information on the meeting can be found on pages 5-7 of this newsletter.

In this number, President Frank Meyskens discusses the mission of the newly instituted PASPCR By-laws Task Force which will start working on necessary changes and clarifications of the Society's by-laws. The current by-laws can be found at http://paspcr.med.umn.edu/bylaws.htm.

In this issue, we continue the "***Let me introduce…***" section which focuses on our sister publication, the "ESPCR Newsletter", which is edited by Dr. Ghanem Ghanem. We also continue the "***Lab Updates***" section and our contributor for this issue is Dr. Vijayasaradhi Setaluri who will discuss the most recent projects being undertaken by his group. In addition, we debut a new column "***Hot off the Presses***" in which experts in the field are invited to comment on a very recent publication.

We hope you enjoy this issue. We encourage you to send us your comments at our email address paspcr.newsletters@gmail.com. Let us know what you would like to see in the letters, suggest sections you think would be useful to include, and recommend any changes that you would like to see.

The PASCR Web Site can be found at:
http://www.paspcr.org

We also encourage you to let us know about meetings that you think would be of interest to members of the Society. If you attend a scientific meeting at which you heard about work which you think will be of interest to the membership of the PASPCR, please write a few paragraphs summarizing what was presented and share it with us. Also, keep us updated on any "***Members in the News***" so we can spread the word of your successes. This is **your** ***Newsletter***, and we depend upon you to help us ensure it best serves the Society's needs. We look forward to hearing your ideas and suggestions and to continue working together to compile the Newsletters for our Society.

The PASPCR Newsletter Editorial Team would like to thank to all our contributors for their columns submitted to us for inclusion in the letters.

PASPCR Newsletter Editorial Team

In this Issue . . . . .

The PanAmerican Society for Pigment Cell Research

C/O Andrzej T. Slominski, M.D., Ph.D.
University of Tennessee Health Science Center
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930 Madison Avenue, Room 525 (Clinical Office),
Memphis, TN 38163

Calendar of Events

2010
Hampton University Skin of Color Research Institute Symposium 2010 - From Benchtop to Bedside
Date and place: April 30-May 2, Williamsburg, VA, USA
Web-site: http://symposium.huscri.com/

2010
The 70th Annual Meeting for the Society for Investigative Dermatology
Date and place: May 5-8, Atlanta, GA, USA
Web-site: http://sidnet.org/Annual_Meeting.asp

2010
The 4th Annual Meeting of ASPCR
Date and place: June 12-14, Guangzhou, CHINA
Web-site: http://www.aspcr.org

2010
The 16th Annual Meeting of ESPCR
Date and place: September 4-7, Hinxton-Cambridge, UK
Contact: wtmeetings@wtconference.org.uk
Web-site:
https://registration.hinxton.wellcome.ac.uk/display_info.asp?id=176

2010
1st Vitiligo World Congress
Date and place: September 23-25, Milano, ITALY
Contact: info@vwc2010.com

2010
16th Annual Meeting of PASPCR
Date and place: September 30–October 2, Vancouver, CANADA
Contact: Youwen Zhou, M.D., Ph.D.
Contact: cpd.info@ubc.ca
Web-site: http://www.paspcr2010.org

2010
The 23rd Annual Meeting of JSPCR
Date and place: November 27-28, Japan

2010
The 50th Annual Meeting of American Society for Cell Biology
Date and place: December 11-15, Atlanta, GA, USA
Web-site: http://www.ascb.org/

2011
21st IPCC
Date and place: September 21-24, Bordeaux, France
Contact: Dr. Alain Taïeb, Ph.D.
Contact: contact@ipcc2011.org
Web-site: http://ipcc2011.org/accueil

The *PASPCR Newsletter* is published three times a year (April, August and December) by the PanAmerican Society for Pigment Cell Research. All views are those of the authors. For further information or to submit articles, please use the e-mail address paspcr.newsletters@gmail.com.

Publication Committee

Corporate Sponsors

By Andrzej Slominski

The PASPCR would like to acknowledge and thank our Government and Corporate Sponsors; the list below reflects contributions made during the year of 2009. In the past, financial gifts from our Sponsors have allowed our Society to increase benefits to the membership far out of proportion to the actual dues collected from members. Money contributed by these Sponsors have been used to support the 15th PASPCR Annual Meeting held in Memphis, including the meeting travel stipends, scientific program and educational activity and any additional meeting expenses, and also for funding our Young Investigator Award program. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions as follows:

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We also thank to Dr. Shosuke Ito for his $340 donation, and to a contributor, who wishes to remain anonymous, for the $1,000 donation.

PASPCR President's Corner

As many of you know, there was a widespread discussion following the selection by the Nomination Committee (chaired by President-elect Greg Barsh) of the new members of the Council for 2010 – 2012 and their acceptance by me (as President) rather than an open election. This led to the recognition that the by-laws of the Society needed to be clarified regarding this issue and that in general an updating and clarification of several elements of the by-laws would be worthwhile.

The By-Laws Task Force has been appointed and the Chair and members are listed below:

Tom Hornyak – Chair, NIH
Richard Spritz, University of Colorado
Caroline Le Poole, Loyola University
Ana-Luisa Kadekadero, University of Cincinnati
Gertrude-Emilia Costin, Institute for In Vitro Sciences

The approximate timetable for a report is as follows:

January 14th - Nominations received
Feb/March - Charge to the Committee from President Meyskens
By June 1st - Draft of changes to President Meyskens for distribution to the Council for review and approval
July 1st - Back to the By-Laws Task Force if necessary
August 1st - Final recommendations and report due
August 1st - September 15th - Vote on changes in by-laws by membership
October 1st - Announcement of vote in Vancouver

We are naturally a little behind schedule ala the snowmageddon and ARRA anxieties but we still should be able to complete the task on time. If you have concerns or particular issues that you would like to see addressed, please contact Dr. Hornyak or any of the Committee members of the task force.

Frank L. Meyskens, Jr.
President PASPCR

Letter from PASPCR Treasurer and Secretary

Dear PASPCR members,

We salute your membership renewal and continuous support of the mission of our Society. Currently, we have 112 members which is a slight drop from the unprecedented peak of 148 members at the end of 2009. The latest was in part due to recruitment of many researchers to attend the PASPCR meeting in Memphis as well as requirement to be a member of the Society to qualify for travel grant or waiver of registration for competitive trainees whose work was selected for presentation. Unfortunately, some of them did not renew. Therefore, I believe, and many share my opinion, that for travel grant for next meeting in Vancouver, the students and postdocs should be members in good standing for a reasonable period of time before applying.

The 15th PASPCR meeting in Memphis was considered a great success by the vast majority of attendees. Here I am happy to report that this was also a financial success to the Society. We have received checks from industry even after the conference ended, and NIH gave us a generous grant in the amount of $23,000. Furthermore, the Hamilton Eye Institute Chaired by Dr. Haik absorbed part of the costs of covering technical and administrative parts of the conference, and we are very grateful for this. When I was ready to reimburse, Dr. Haik advised me that that he already covered uncovered costs. This generated an unexpected surplus of more than $30,000, which will be used to fund the travel grants for postdocs and students to attend the PASPCR meeting in Vancouver and later on to attend the IPPC meeting in Bordeaux, France in 2011.

For the Vancouver meeting we will offer stipends ($500 or $700) to cover costs of the travel and stay in Vancouver, while the Chair of the Conference, Dr. Youwen Zhou will waive the registration fees for successful applicants. The amount of travel stipend should be based on the geographical location that determines the final costs: $500 for west coast applicants who are close to Vancouver and $700 for east coast, mid-south or mid-west, to cover increased costs of air-ticket. They will be selected by the Scientific Review Committee based on the scientific soundness of the abstracts, eligibility and letters of support. In order to qualify for the travel grant the applicant has to be a member of the PASPCR in good standing **by April 30, 2010.** This will give time to renew for those who have forgotten doing so.

Also in order to help the Vancouver organizers we will cover costs of travel and accommodations for two distinguished speakers from Europe, Dr. C. Goding, and Dr. K. Schallreuter. The remaining balance will be used for travel grants in 2011 to attend the conference in Bordeaux, France, and I believe that there is a need for such help for eligible investigators, since the funding for international travels are not readily available.

Again, as it was in the past, the Johnson and Johnson Consumer Companies generously sent to the Society two checks for the total amount of $10,000. $5,000 are designated to support directly the PASPCR meeting in Vancouver and the check was already sent to the organizers from my office. The remaining $5,000 will cover the costs connected with Aaron B. Lerner Lecture (honorarium plaque, and costs of travel and accommodation) that will be presented during the conference. Again we are very grateful to the Johnson and Johnson Consumer Companies for this generous support and to Dr. Miri Seiberg for her tireless work on behalf the Pigment Cell Community. Also I am happy to report that Dr. Shosuke Ito is supporting the Society in the form of generous gift in the amount of $340.

Andrzej Slominski, Secretary/Treasurer

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Pan American Society for Pigment Cell Research 2010 Annual Conference "New Developments in the Pathogenesis & Treatment of Pigment Conditions and Melanoma"

September 30 – October 2, 2010

The British Columbia Cancer Research Centre, 600 West 10th Ave, Vancouver, BC, Canada

Welcome to Vancouver!

On behalf of my co-Chair, Dr. Greg Barsh, and the rest of the Organizing and Scientific Committees, I would like to invite you all to this year's PASPCR annual meeting in Vancouver, the proud host city of the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Vancouver is a major gateway city on the pacific coast of the vast country of Canada. Long recognized as a sophisticated cosmopolitan port city that offers a wide variety of recreational activities (where else in the world can you ski on the white slopes in the morning, play a round of golf city mid day, and take a dip in the pacific ocean before dinner, all in the same day?), Vancouver has now joined the elite list of world cities that is part of the Olympic legacy. Trust me, all the images of the beautiful city, the friendly Canadian faces, the unmatched variety of cultures, foods, and entertainment that you have seen on television are real!

Of course, in addition to all that Vancouver has to offer, you have more important reasons to come. As can be seen in the preliminary program (www.PASPCR2010.org), you will find a list of distinguished keynote speakers on a variety of topics relevant to pigmentation and melanoma research. You will find the traditional topics of our Society being represented. This year we are aiming for a closer marriage between basic researchers, physicians, and pharmaceutical industry involved in treatment of pigmentation diseases and melanoma. As an innovative feature - thanks to Dr. Barsh and Dr. Meyskens - you will experience a brand new format of poster presentation. Instead of viewers going to the posters, the poster presenters will bring their posters to the audience in a highly lively and interactive manner. Dr. Meyskens has promised to show an "interactive side" of himself during the poster presentation previously unknown to the research community. That alone is worth witnessing!

So, once again, welcome to Vancouver.

Youwen Zhou, MD, PhD
Conference Chairman
16th PASPCR Annual Meeting (September 30 - Oct 2, 2010)
(Vancouver Pigmentation and Melanoma Research Conference)
Director and Chieng Scientist in Molecular Medicine
Chieng Genomics Centre
Laboratory of Predictive Medicine and Therapeutics
Department of Dermatology and Skin Science
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Important deadlines

Abstract submission: June 1st, 2010
Travel grant application deadline: June 1st, 2010
Early registration deadline: July 1, 2010
Meeting rate hotel reservation deadline: September 1, 2010.

Program

September 30, 2010

12:45-13:45 **Opening Ceremony -** *Dr. Youwen Zhou, Dr. Greg Barsh*
Presidential Address: Fifteen Years of Redox and Melanoma – Where Are We Headed?
Dr. Frank Meyskens

Oral Session 1 – 13:50 – 16:50
Melanoma: Bench to Bedside
Chair: Dr. Sancy Leachman - *Salt Lake City, Utah, USA*

13:50-14:20 **Signalling a Phenotype Switch in Melanoma**
Dr. Colin Goding - Oxford, UK
14:20-14:50 **Targeting Oxidative Stress for Melanoma Chemoprevention**
Dr. Doug Grossman - Salt Lake City, Utah, USA
14:50-15:20 **Lessons Learned from Nearly Four Decades of Clinical Trials in Early Stage and Metastatic Melanoma**
Dr. Vernon Sondak - Tampa, Florida, USA
15:20-15:30 Coffee Break
15:30-16:50 Oral Abstracts 1-4 *TBC*
16:50-18:20 **Poster Session 1** (Basic Science)
Moderator: Dr. Greg Barsh - Stanford, California, USA
18:20 Welcome Reception

October 1, 2010

Oral Session 2 – 08:30 – 10:50
Melanin Synthesis and Pigmentation Therapies
Chair: Dr. Marjan Huizing - *Bethesda, Maryland, USA*
Co-Chair: Dr. Haishan Zeng - *Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*

08:30-09:00 **Animal Models of Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome**
Dr. Esteban Dell'Angelica - Los Angeles, California, USA
09:00-09:30 **Laser Treatment for Pigmented Conditions: What Works and What Does Not?**
Dr. Rox Anderson - Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA
09:30-10:50 Oral Abstracts 1-4 *TBC*
10:50-11:00 Coffee Break
11:00-12:00 **Aaron B. Lerner Lecture** *TBC*
12:00-13:00 Lunch

Oral Session 3 – 13:00 – 15:00
Physiology, Oxidative Stress and Neoplasia
Chair: Dr. Andrzej Slominski - *Memphis, Tennessee, USA*
Co-Chair: Dr. Caroline Le Poole - *Chicago, Illinois, USA*

13:00-13:30 **Oxidative Stress and Skin Pigmentation - What is New?**
Dr. Karin Schallreuter - Bradford, UK
13:30-14:00 **MicroRNA and Melanoma Progression**
Dr. Victor Tron - Kingston, Ontario, Canada
14:00-15:00 Oral Abstracts 1-3 *TBC*
15:00-15:15 Coffee Break

Oral Session 4 – 15:15 – 17:15
Greying, Photoaging, Photobiology and Phototherapy
Chair: Dr. Harvey Lui - *Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*

15:15-15:45 **Why Does Our Hair Turn Gray?**
Dr. Emi Nishimura - Kanazawa, Japan
15:45-16:15 **Pigmentation and Photobiology**
Dr. Ilt Hamzavi - Detroit, Michigan, USA
16:15-17:15 Oral Abstracts 1-3 *TBC*
17:15-18:30 **Poster Session 2** (Clinical Science)
Moderator: Dr. Youwen Zhou - Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
18:30 Conference Day Ends

October 2, 2010

Oral Session 5 – 08:30 – 11:10
Vitiligo, Pathogenesis and Therapy
Chair: *TBC*
Co-Chair: *Dr. Gisela Erf - Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA*

08:30-09:00 **Vitiligo Susceptibility Genes**
Dr. Richard Spritz - Denver, Colorado, USA
09:00-09:30 **Vitiligo Pathogenesis: What is New?**
Dr. Youwen Zhou - Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
09:30-10:00 **Recent Advances in Surgical Treatment of Vitiligo**
Dr. Ahmed Alissa - Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
10:00-10:10 Coffee Break
10:10-11:10 Oral Abstracts 1-3 *TBC*
11:10-12:40 **Poster Session 3** (Translational Science)
Moderator: Dr. Frank Meyskens - Irvine, California, USA
12:40-13:40 Lunch

Oral Session 6 – 13:40 – 16:00
Melanocyte Development, Genetics and Animal Models
Chair: Dr. William Pavan – *Bethesda, Maryland, USA*
Co-Chair: Dr. Catherine van Raamsdonk – *Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*

13:40-14:20 **TBA**
Dr. David Parichy - Seattle, Washington, USA
14:20-14:40 **Alternative Pathways for Melanocyte Development**
Dr. Patrik Ernfors - Stockholm, Sweden
14:40-16:00 Oral Abstracts 1-4 *TBC*
16:00-17:00 **Business Meeting**
17:00 **Gala Dinner**

PCMR Journal Corner

A letter from the Editor of Pigment Cell& Melanoma Research Journal, Ze'ev Ronai

Eight months ago I began to share duties with the outgoing Editor of Pigment Cell & Melanoma Research (PCMR), Colin Goding, and for two months I have been the sole Editor-in-Chief. This duty is now supported actively by two Executive Editors, Heinz Arnheiter and Glenn Merlino, who oversee the review of papers in the pigment and melanoma fields, respectively. The Editorial team uses the online system which is now fully integrated into the PCMR operations. With the help of the publisher, we managed to reduce time for online publication to 2-3 days from acceptance. Manuscript review time is now also shorter, about 14-20 days. With more efficient processing at all levels, we are seeing more submissions than ever before.

PCMR today offers comprehensive coverage of our two fields, having integrated melanoma with pigmentation. Notably, this is not an entirely new idea; at its inception the former PCR also featured melanoma research.

So what is different today at PCMR? Quite simply our realization that mechanisms underlying pigment gene expression and activity are deregulated in melanoma. More than ever we appreciate the contribution of pigment genes in the control of melanoma development and progression – with MITF, a key regulator of melanocyte biogenesis and development, being the best example. The possibility that melanoma stem cells originate from melanocytes stem cells and that pigmentation gene programs may be deregulated in such stem cells, further integrates these two seemingly disciplines. As a result, experts from both the pigmentation and melanoma research community actively participate in melanoma and pigment societies' conferences.

My own research interests have followed a similar path. Over the years I have focused on signal transduction pathways that control melanoma development with emphasis on JNK and ATF2. Recently, my lab has turned its attention to pigmentation genes regulated by these pathways, which we propose are linked to melanoma development and progression.

PCMR not only maintains but is striving to enhance its strong focus and commitment for publication of studies addressing mechanisms underlying the regulation and function of pigment genes as well as those that impact melanocytes biology. Along these lines, understanding of genetic disorders associated with deregulated pigment genes remains an area that has been well appreciated by PCMR readers as by the general community. Vitiligo is one such example that has been well associated with our journal. Mechanisms that govern patterns of pigmentation, new understanding of pigment gene functions, including the link between pigment genes and general cellular processes such as ROS, the use of model organisms to address these questions are only representative of research areas that remain of great interest to PCMR.

As the incoming Editor-in-Chief, I have two goals for PCMR. First, I want all members of the pigment and melanoma communities to look forward to our next issue and find in it thorough coverage of important and interesting topics. I hope to accomplish this goal by including timely **News and Views** (covering critical published findings), **Commentaries and Reviews** (offering analysis and opinion on important research developments), which you all are invited to take part in. We have also implemented new sections, including **Resource** (providing information about reagents available to the community) and **Profile** (featuring leading members in our community). Second, I will continue the important mission initiated by Colin Goding, which is to increase the quality and impact of papers published in PCMR. This task can only be accomplished with your help.

We ask that reviewers not only take a comprehensive view but be constructive. In parallel, the journal editors guide authors through possible revisions. In the past 8 months, approximately 35% of manuscripts were rejected and 65% were subject to further processing. Of the latter, 95% went through at least one round of revision. The outcomes of this process are stronger papers, stronger science and a stronger journal.

PCMR also strives to include new areas of research as they emerge. Those include genomic data available from large scale sequencing, stem cell research, systems biology and new model systems.

I am committed to balance the representation of melanoma and pigmentation research in PCMR, to the extent possible, an aspect that largely depends on your own rigorous efforts in submitting your important studies to the journal. Finally, to show your support for PCMR you can read it, publish in it – but also *cite* it. The strength of any journal is directly proportional to the number of citations it receives. Therefore, we ask that you cite papers published in PCMR in every manuscript you submit anywhere.

We welcome your suggestions for improvements. We have instituted an author feedback option, which is sent to all authors submitting to PCMR. Soon we expect to add an online link for comments by members of our communities. In any case, feel free to send me your thoughts and suggestions directly.

In closing, I reiterate what an honor it is to serve you all. I hope you will send me more of your outstanding research to be included in a stronger and more comprehensive PCMR.

Thank you,

Ze'ev Ronai,
Editor-in-Chief
Pigment Cell & Melanoma Research
Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute
La Jolla, CA, 92037, USA.

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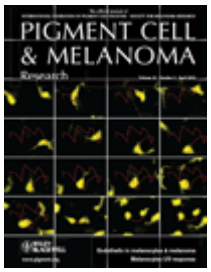


Let Me Introduce…

Dr. Ghanem Ghanem, the Editor of the ESPCR Newsletters

It is a pleasure and a privilege to address PASPCR members through the present Newsletter being the Editor of the ESPCR Bulletin for about 20 years. The need for an official publishing mean was obvious since the creation of the ESPCR in 1987, to first inform all members about the activities of the Society on a regular basis and also to comply with a legal issue linked to its status as a non-profit organization. The content of the Bulletin has been a matter of debate inside the ESPCR Council and three sections have been advised. Giuseppe Prota, President at that time, brought the final touch. These did not change ever since. The first section is dedicated mainly to discussions, debates, opinions, Meeting Reports and Minutes of Council meetings and General Assemblies. The second section handles literature updates commented by experts in different fields who form the "International Editorial Board" of the Bulletin as it is today:

1. Chemistry of Melanins and other pigments (Alexandra Napolitano, Naples)
2. Biology of pigment cells and pigmentary disorders (Mauro Picardo, Rome)
3. MSH, MCH, other hormones (Markus Böhm, Münster)
4. Photobiology (Nico Smit, Leiden)
5. Genetics, molecular and developmental biology (Friedo Beermann, Lausanne)
6. Neuromelanins (Marco d'Ischia, Naples)
7. Tyrosinase, TRPs, other enzymes (José-Carlos Garcia-Borron, Murcia)
8. Melanosomes (Jan Borovansky, Prague)
9. Melanoma experimental, cell culture (Renato Morandini, Brussels)

The third section includes calendar of events, announcements, new members and varia.

The contents were also very useful to ESPCR members from former Europe eastern countries over many years. Similarly some interesting papers published in local journals in some European countries were also included regularly in the Bulletin.

The ESPCR Bulletin also went through a period of transition from a hard copy to an electronic version. As early as 1996, an electronic version was distributed to members having an e-mail! In the following years, the number of hard copies decreased rapidly and the last was distributed in 2002. In parallel, an ESPCR web site was built in my university in Brussels and was operational in 1996 and hosted a page that was dedicated to the Bulletin and also contained downloadable back issues. However, this page was within a password restricted area only available to ESPCR members since the creation of the website.

In 1993, a special issue of the Bulletin was dedicated to a large survey of pigment cell research in Europe mainly thanks to the contribution of Patrick Riley. This issue as well as the whole collection (except for the last three years) are freely available from www.espcr.org site cleverly mastered today by Luis Montoliu. The pages of the Bulletin followed a sequential numbers and we are now at page 1991 and issue 65.

The choice of a logo for the Bulletin was designed by a talented Belgian medical student for the first issue of the Bulletin and represented Europe as a pigment cell. The logo lasted until November 1994 (issue 20) and has been replaced by another representing a pigment cell with ESPCR letters of different colors designed by an Italian artist. It became also the official logo of the ESPCR as it stands today.

During the whole period, I was really supported by all the successive councils and had excellent collaborations with all Chairmen and I feel indebted to so many people also from sister societies who contributed to the success of the Bulletin in a way or another. Of course, there are still a lot to improve, add, adapt, reshape, etc…

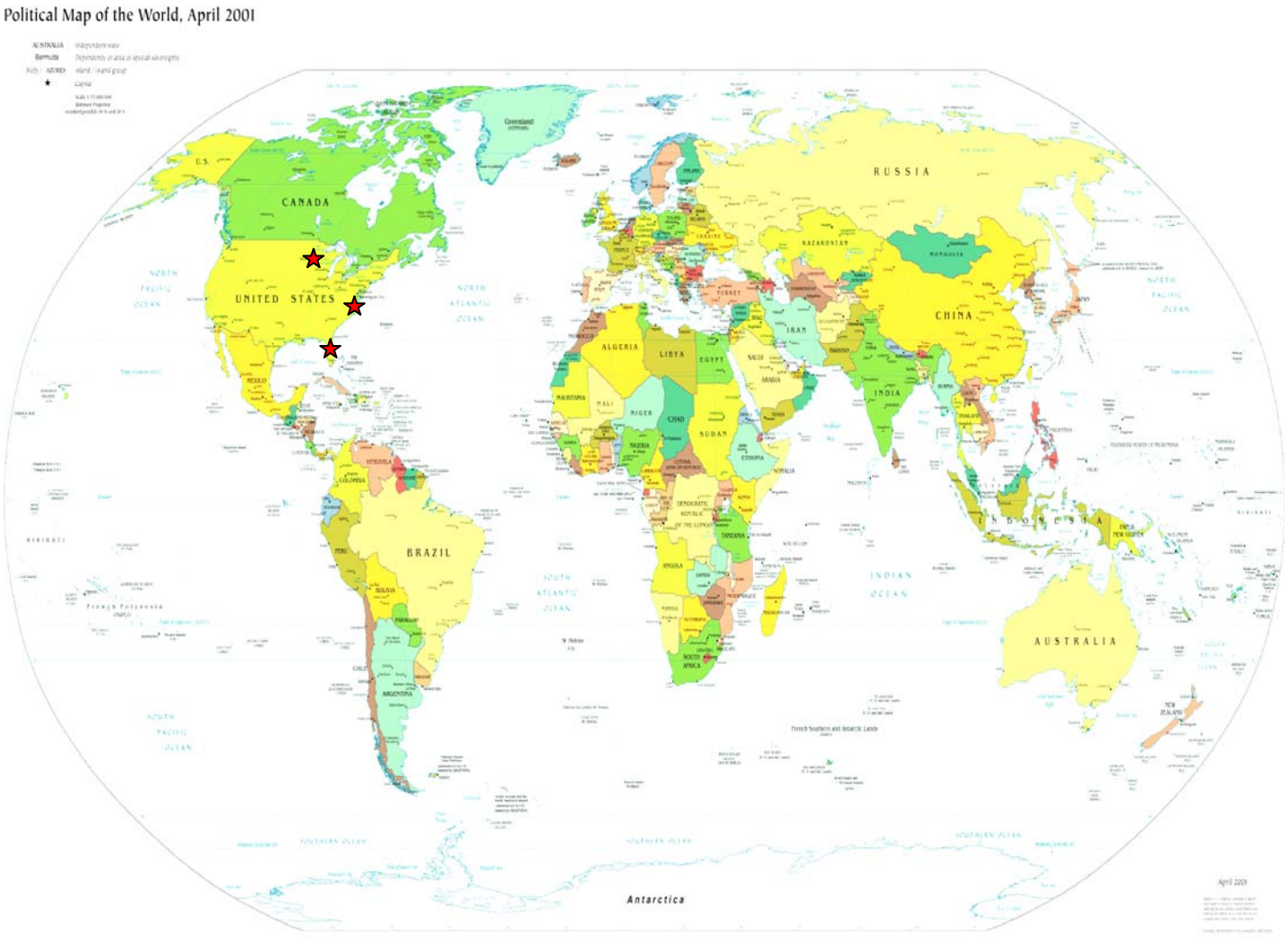
G. Ghanem, Editor, ESPCR Bulletin

LAB UPDATES. INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVES.

KEEPING THE PIGMENTATION COMMUNITY CONNECTED

In this issue, we continue the "***Lab Updates***" section with a contribution from Vijayasaradhi Setaluri. This column provides a forum for PIs and their post-doctoral fellows to let us know what they are working on and tell us about new avenues of research the lab is focusing on. To find out what is new with our colleagues in industry, we will have "***Industry Perspectives***". We hope that you will take the opportunity to fill us in on what is happening in your lab or company. Volunteers would be greatly appreciated, just email us at paspcr.newsletters@gmail.com.

This initiative is part of our effort to keep the pigmentation community connected and to emphasize the importance of collaboration and communication between groups. We will keep adding stars on our world map below each time you contribute a column about your newest research projects. So, let's go on a global research adventure!



Courtesy: *http://www.mygeo.info/karten/802784.jpg*

Lab Updates

Vijayasaradhi Setaluri's Lab

In my laboratory, we study melanocyte biology from the perspective of human cutaneous melanoma. Despite the relative ease with which we can now isolate, culture and manipulate neonatal human foreskin melanocytes, the exquisite growth control and differentiated phenotype these cells exhibit, in contrast to melanoma cells, continues to fascinate me.

Our studies on the relationship between melanocytic differentiation and growth of melanoma cells led us to two new areas of research. These ongoing areas of research in my laboratory are: 1) role of transient receptor potential, Melastatin1 (TRPM1) and calcium homeostasis in growth and differentiation of normal and malignant melanocytes and 2) neural differentiation of transformed melanocyte.

TRPM1 is a subfamily of ion channels that are involved in sensing taste, ambient temperature, low pH, osmolarity and chemical ligands. TRPM1, the founding member, was originally identified as melanoma metastasis suppressor based on its expression in normal pigment cells in the skin and the eye but not in aggressive, metastasis-competent melanomas. Recently, TRPM1 has been shown to be a component of the retinal bipolar cells and mutations in TRPM1 cause complete congenital stationary night blindness in humans.

We showed that TRPM1 expression and intracellular Ca^{2+} levels are significantly lower in rapidly proliferating human melanocytes compared to the slow growing, differentiated melanocytes. Knockdown of TRPM1 results in reduced intracellular Ca^{2+} and decreased Ca^{2+} uptake suggesting a role for TRPM1 in Ca^{2+} homeostasis in melanocytes. TRPM1 knockdown also decreases tyrosinase activity and intracellular melanin content. Exposure of melanocytes to UVB radiation represses TRPM1 expression accompanied by decrease in mobilization of intracellular Ca^{2+} and uptake of extracellular Ca^{2+} indicating a role for TRPM1-mediated Ca^{2+} homeostasis and melanogenesis (1). Research in my laboratory is now focused on understanding the regulation of *TRPM1* and the potential role of TRPM1 and calcium in suppression of melanoma tumor progression.

As derivatives of neural crest, melanocytes and especially neoplastic melanocytes have long been reported to show some features of neural lineages. We discovered that neoplastic melanocytes - both in benign nevi and malignant primary melanoma - express microtubule associated protein MAP2, a *bon fide* neuronal terminal differentiation marker. Since MAP2 expression is rarely found in metastatic melanomas, we proposed and showed that loss of MAP2 expression correlates with aggressiveness of primary melanoma and that MAP2 expression in primary melanoma is an indicator of good prognosis. In support of this, ectopic expression of MAP2 inhibited melanoma growth *in vitro* and *in vivo*. Consistent with its role in stabilizing microtubules and disrupting their dynamic instability, MAP2 expression in melanoma cells induced mitotic spindle defects resulting in cell cycle arrest and cell death. Based on these findings, we proposed that induction of MAP2 could be a useful melanoma treatment strategy. To this end, we focused our attention to understanding how *MAP2* is regulated in melanocytes and melanoma (2). We found that in melanoma cells, but not melanocytes, MAP2 expression can be induced by demethylating agent 5-aza-2'-cytidine and that *MAP2* promoter is progressively methylated during melanoma progression indicating that epigenetic mechanisms of silencing *MAP2*. Since *MAP*2 promoter activity levels in melanoma cell lines also correlated with activating mutation in *BRAF*, we investigated whether BRAF signaling is involved in MAP2 expression. We found that hyperactivation of BRAF-MEK signaling can activate *MAP2* in melanoma by two independent mechanisms –

promoter demethylation or downregulation of neuronal transcription repressor HES1. We are currently exploring the role of RAS-BRAF-MAPK signaling in melanocyte differentiation and how its dysregulation alters not only proliferation of melanocytes but also their differentiation.

The opportunity to pen this article reminded me the length of my relationship with melanocytes. My affair with melanocytes started long before I met and married my wife and lasted through all these years of my marriage and raising two kids. Still, I never miss an opportunity to look at and admire the beauty of my favorite cells under the microscope. I have proudly introduced my trophy cells to countless people (both scientist and non-scientists) who had never heard of or seen them.

1. Devi, S., Kedlaya, R., Maddodi, N., Bhat, K. M. R., Weber, C. S., Valdivia, H., Setaluri, V. (2009) Calcium homeostasis in human melanocytes: Role of transient receptor potential melastatin 1 (TRPM1) and its regulation by Ultraviolet Light. *Amer J Physiol-Cell Physiol* 297: C679-687.

2. Maddodi, N., Bhat, K. M. R., Devi, S., Zhang, S-C., Setaluri, V. (2010) Oncogenic $BRAF^{V600E}$ Induces Expression of Neuronal Differentiation Marker MAP2 in Melanoma Cells by Promoter Demethylation and Downregulation of Transcriptional Repressor HES1. *J Biol Chem* 285:242-54

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Hot off the Presses

We debut a new column in this issue, with the goal of giving our readers the opportunity to highlight their recent publications or comment on a just published article. PASPCR members are welcome to submit their accepted or recently published article/s to an expert in the field for comment. Alternatively, if you would like to comment on an article, please contact us via the newsletter email at paspcr.newsletters@gmail.com. Thank you to Alain Taïeb for taking on the first comment!

Comment on de Castro et al.: Genetic Variants of DDR1 gene are associated to vitiligo in two independent Brazilian populations. Journal of Investigative Dermatology, 2010. Molecular insights into the melanocytorrhagic theory of vitiligo

By Alain Taïeb, Bordeaux, France

Vitiligo occurs worldwide with an estimated overall prevalence of less than 0.5% in population-based studies. Compared to other common chronic skin disorders for monozygous twin concordance, a marker of the inherited component in complex disorders, the inherited component of vitiligo is weaker: only 23% concordance for vitiligo, vs. 35–56% in psoriasis and up to 72% in atopic dermatitis. This suggests an important role for epigenetic and environmental factors. However, genetic findings may focus research in the right direction in multigenic disorders.

Familial aggregation of NSV cases takes a non-Mendelian pattern that is suggestive of polygenic, multifactorial inheritance. Segregation analyses suggest that multiple major loci contribute to vitiligo susceptibility. Genome-wide linkage analyses performed in populations of various ethnic backgrounds showed that the major inherited loci are not the same. Based on the work of Richard Spritz's lab, data in European-descent populations

suggest that some major genes are markers of an autoimmune diathesis and others segregate with vitiligo in isolation [reviewed in Picardo & Taïeb, 2010]. Gene expression studies in cultured melanocytes suggest other important cellular targets [Strömberg et al., 2008].

The recently published paper by de Castro et al. on DDR1 (discoidin domain receptor) genes variants in a vitiligo population from Brazil reinforce the role of local non immune skin factors in the pathogenesis of the disease [de Castro et al., 2010]. A Korean-based study has also made similar observations [Kim et al., 2010]. Based on the clinically obvious importance of the Koebner phenomenon (isomorphic response in response to noxious, especially traumatic agents) in vitiligo, our group has proposed for some time that a loose attachment of melanocytes at the epidermal basement membrane may be a predisposing factor for vitiligo as a first step before autoimmunization or autoinflammation [Gauthier et al., 2003], but so far no molecular argument has been unveiled after attempts to look at several adhesion proteins.

Pioneering work by Fukunaga-Kalabis et al. [2006, 2008] has revealed that the tridimensional location of melanocytes in the epidermis is dependent on DDR-1 under the control of CCN3/Nov, a matrix protein critical for melanocyte homeostasis, which modulates the adhesion of melanocytes to collagen IV. The DDR family (DDR 1 and 2) are important for cell adhesion to collagens. DDR are tyrosine kinase receptors which can be inhibited by imatinib, a drug which may influence vitiligoid changes [Day et al., 2008]. DDR are involved during development for cell adhesion, migration, proliferation and matrix remodeling [Yoshimura et al., 2005]. DDR1 is mostly expressed on epithelial cells and leukocytes, whereas DDR2 expression is restricted to mensenchymal cells [Vogel et al., 2001].

The DDR1 variants need now to be studied functionally to approach the melanocytorrhagic scenario of vitiligo at the cellular and molecular level, and some existing models might be useful [Cario-André et al., 2007]. This is a new avenue for vitiligo research which should logically start based on skin anomalies: for an overall chronic skin condition, this sounds right [Picardo & Taïeb, 2010].

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Members in the news

Scientists in the School Program

On December 10th, 2009, Dr. Gertrude-Emilia Costin was invited by Mrs. Laurie Sullivan at Kate Waller Barrett Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia, to talk to three 4th grade classes about how she became a scientist. Dr. Costin shared her "Keys to Success" for becoming a toxicologist in a presentation entitled "How I became a scientist – invitation to a journey to discover the scientist in each and every one of us…" This activity was part of the Washington, D.C. area Coalition for the Public Understanding of Science (DC-COPUS) Scientists in the School Program.

Additional information:
http://tinyurl.com/DrCostin-09

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Other news

A new book on "Vitiligo" has been just published by Springer, 2010.

The book is edited by Prof. Mauro Picardo (Vice-President of IFPCS and former President of ESPCR) and Prof. Alain Taïeb (Secretary of ESPCR and member of the IFPCS council). Most of the authors responsible for the different book chapters are also IFPCS members.

Extracted from Springer's web page: "*Vitiligo is one of the most common cutaneous disorders. Great numbers of affected patients suffer from the high stigmatizing impact of this disease. Up to now, clinical guidelines for the treatment of vitiligo were non-existent. In order to fill this void, this textbook defines and gives a complete overview of the disease, both regarding the classification of differential diagnosis as well as the treatment. Written by the most authoritative experts in the field, all therapy recommendations are based on new evidence-based guidelines. It includes case studies with illustrations before and after the treatment in order to demonstrate the treatment success. This textbook will be a valuable resource for all physicians who are seeing patients with this disease*".

Additional information:
http://www.springer.com/medicine/dermatology/book/978-3-540-69360-4

EuMelaNet - New Interest Group Created Within ESPCR

EuMelaNet is a new Interest Group born within the European Society of Pigment Cell Research (ESPCR). EuMelaNet stands for European Network for Melanin Research.

Realizing the increasing interest in melanins and related biopolymers in Europe and several countries all over the world, in 2009 during the XVth ESPCR meeting, held in Muenster, a number of researchers from academic and research institutions decided to implement a research network, the European Network for Melanin Research (EuMelaNet), with the aim of promoting research on melanins and melanogenesis at multidisciplinary level and offering their collective knowledge and expertise to meet the growing demand for new bio-based materials on the part of companies and health institutions.

The scientific coordinator of EuMelaNet is Prof. Marco d'Ischia (Department of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry, University of Naples Federico II, Naples, Italy). Those interested might contact EuMelaNet by sending an email message to eumelanet@espcr.org or by visiting the EuMelaNet web page: http://www.espcr.org/eumelanet/.

A new book on "Colors of Mice" will be released by Wiley-Blackwell in May, 2010

The authors of the book entitled "The Colors of Mice: A Model Genetic Network" are M. Lynn Lamoreux, Véronique Delmas, Lionel Larue and Dorothy Bennett.

Extracted from Wiley-Blackwell's web page: *"Serving the needs of pigment cell biologists, cellular physiologists, developmental geneticists, researchers interested in melanoma and more, this new book brings to market a blend of new technologies and new insights in the fields of both pigmentation and mouse geneticists. It will include some comparative information on other organisms as well. The book is hailed for being written by 3 of the premier scientists in the field. These authors aim to present the molecular /cellular work in the context of phenotype and the interacting functions of genes that direct the development and function of one biological system. Interactions over details that can be found on the web are stressed. Overall the pigmentary systems provide a model for the study of all systems because it is a particularly well developed model."*

Additional information:
http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-1405179546,subjectCd-LS62,descCd-description.html

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Positions Wanted / Available

Postings for **Positions Wanted** will be open only to members of the PanAmerican Society for Pigment Cell Research or its sister societies (ASPCR, JSPCR and ESPCR). Postings for **Positions Available** will be open to all individuals and institutions so long as the position is related to pigment cell research. Please send postings to Bill Oetting at oetti001@umn.edu.

The postings will remain on the **Positions Wanted and Available** section of the PASPCR Newsletter and on the web page for 1 year, unless other arrangements are made. Please provide an expiration date for any submitted posting if less than 1 year. Final decisions will be made by the Publications Committee of the PASPCR.

Positions Available

A postdoctoral position is available immediately in the Department of Dermatology at University of Wisconsin, Madison WI to participate in ongoing studies on a) role of calcium-channel TRPM1 in melanocyte differentiation and melanoma tumorigenesis and b) regulation of genes during melanoma tumor progression (Devi et al., *Amer J Physiol*. 297: C679-687, 2009; Maddodi et al., *J Biol Chem*. 285:242-254, 2010). We are seeking a highly motivated individual with a strong interest in melanocyte/melanoma and aspirations for career development. Successful applicants must have a PhD degree in biochemistry, cell or molecular biology or cancer biology and must have demonstrated expertise in cell and molecular biology techniques. Interested applicants should send their curriculum vitae, a statement of research interests and list of at least three references to:

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2010 PASPCR MEMBERSHIP LIST

Dear PASPCR members,
Thank you for supporting our Society and paying your dues in time. This year, the first to pay the annual dues was Dr. Tae-Jin Yoon. Thank you for doing so and for setting an example for all of us to follow!

Andrzej Slominski

The PASPCR Membership List is published in the April number of the PASPCR Newsletter. However, the membership is updated continuously and the names and address of new members and any changes in members' contacts are published during the year in the remaining two issues. Therefore, please inform the Secretary/Treasurer of any changes in your contact info that happen during the year so we could communicate them to the members through the Newsletter.

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