

PASPCR

August 2010
Vol. 18 Number 2S

Newsletter



Report and recommendation of the PASPCR nominating committee by Greg Barsh

The nominating committee is chaired by the president-elect (myself), and includes 3 members-at-large (Zalfa Abdel-Malek, Lidia Kos, Bill Pavan) and 1 council member (Tom Hornyak). We considered a total of 14 candidates for council members and 5 candidates for president-elect, and make the following consensus recommendation for candidates to be elected by the general society membership. This recommendation is based on the willingness of candidates to serve, diversity in terms of both areas of expertise and background, and the potential to maintain and move the society forward in both leadership and vision. Our process involves an anonymous vote of all committee members and approval of that process by the current PASPCR council and president.

The candidates and a brief statement regarding their background and interests are:

For President-elect:

Sancy Leachman, Associate Professor of Dermatology, University of Utah

Dr. Leachman received an MD PhD from UT Southwestern, completed a residency and fellowship in dermatology at Yale University, and has been on the faculty at University of Utah for more than a decade. She is Director of the Melanoma and Cutaneous Oncology Program, a long-standing and enthusiastic member of the PASPCR, and her research interests are focused on the discovery and characterization of melanoma susceptibility genes, and the relationship of melanoma susceptibility to constitutional features such as ancestry, freckling, and skin color.

Caroline Le Poole, Associate Professor of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology at Loyola University Chicago

While probing vitiligo etiology, Dr. Le Poole has studied diverse aspects of melanocyte physiology. With autoimmune depigmentation involving effective immune responses to melanosomal proteins often lacking in melanoma, her current lab research is focused on defining vaccine opportunities for either disease. Current honors include membership of NCI Cancer Immunopathology and Immunotherapy study section and of the IFPCS council. The 14th Annual PASPCR meeting in Chicago (co-) chaired by Caroline initiated a lively discussion among PASPCR members on the interplay between pigmentation and ethnicity.

For Council:

Esteban Dell'Angelica, Associate Professor of Human Genetics, UCLA

My interest in pigment cell biology dates back to my years as a postdoc, when I worked on a project that led to the description of Hermansky-Pudlak syndrome (HPS) type 2 as a disease caused by mutations in a previously known component of the protein trafficking machinery. Since I joined the UCLA Department of Human Genetics in 2000, I have been working on the products of genes mutated in all other forms of HPS, specifically in their assembly into protein complexes and their potential role in protein trafficking and organelle dynamics. During the last few years I have been using the fruit fly as a powerful genetic model to study the role of these complexes in pigment granule biogenesis. I have been a member of PASPCR since 2003, and see this candidacy to join the Council not just as an honor but also as an opportunity to work towards the continuing growth of the Society.

John D'Orazio, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Molecular and Biomedical Pharmacology, University of Kentucky

As a physician scientist, I am interesting in developing safe, novel ways to prevent melanoma and other types of skin cancer. In David Fisher's lab, I developed a useful animal model in which the histologic placement and biologic characteristics of epidermal melanocytes mimic their human counterparts and found that topically applied forskolin rescued eumelanotic pigmentation caused by melanocortin 1 receptor (Mc1r) defects, showing that the UV-prone fair-skinned phenotype can be pharmacologically modified. My laboratory uses this animal model and primary melanocytes and keratinocytes derived thereof to define UV-induced molecular events that occur in skin cells of variant Mc1r status. I would be delighted to serve the PASPCR in the capacity of a council member to foster frequent communication and collaboration among members and to be involved in helping shape the society's policies.

Deborah Lang, Assistant Professor of Medicine, and Director of Research for Dermatology, University of Chicago

Within the scope of pigment cell research, my laboratory's focus is on melanocyte biology, melanocyte stem cells, and melanoma. The general hypothesis of the laboratory is that pathways and factors that play a role during embryo development are recycled in the stem cell of the adult, and these very same pathways are subverted in tumors. We are particularly interested in transcription factors in terms of their down-stream targets, how these proteins are modified during differentiation or transformation, and the regulation of both the factors function and expression. I have been a member of PASPCR for several years, participated on committees for society meetings as well as meeting sessions, participated as a judge of abstracts for our junior members, and published manuscripts in our journal, Pigment Cell & Melanoma Research.

Jim Lister, Assistant Professor of Genetics, Virginia Commonwealth University

I received my B.A. in Biology from Pomona College in 1990 and Ph.D. in Molecular and Cellular Biology from Harvard in 1997. I began studying pigmentation in zebrafish as a post-doc in the Raible lab at the University of Washington, where I identified zebrafish orthologs of Mitf. I have been a member of the PASPCR since 1999. Since 2004 I have been an Assistant Professor in the Department of Human and Molecular Genetics at Virginia Commonwealth University. My research focus continues to be the function of the mitf genes in zebrafish pigment cell development, and in melanoma.

John Pawelek, Professor of Dermatology, Yale School of Medicine

He has authored nearly 200 peer-reviewed papers in the areas of pigmentation and melanoma and is past president of the PASPCR. His achievements include the discoveries of dopachrome tautomerase and the activation of MC1 receptors by UV light. He has won several awards for his work and in June, 2010 was honored with the inauguration of the John M. Pawelek Lecture at the 4th Meeting of the ASPCR. He frequently lectures at scientific conferences in the US and abroad.

Vijay Setaluri, Professor of Dermatology, University of Wisconsin

I have been interested and involved in melanocyte biology for over 20 years. I obtained my postdoctoral training in the laboratory of Dr. Alan Houghton at Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. After serving as faculty at Rockefeller University and Wake Forest University School of Medicine, I joined University of Wisconsin in 2005. My research interests include basic cell biology of melanocytes, neoplastic transformation and melanoma differentiation. My research has contributed to understanding of melanosomal protein sorting and melanosome biogenesis, melanosomal proteins as melanoma antigens, calcium homeostasis in melanocytes and melanoma transdifferentiation.

Youwen Zhou, Associate Professor of Dermatology, University of British Columbia

Youwen is a clinician scientist with clinical and research interests in vitiligo and melanoma. He received PhD in molecular genetics in State University of New York (1990) and MD in University of Toronto (1995). After dermatology residency and clinical fellowship in cutaneous oncology in University of British Columbia (UBC), he established the Molecular Medicine Laboratory at UBC. He has published 50 peer reviewed papers, including in Nature Genetics. He sits on the Institute Advisory Board of Canadian Institutes of Health Research. If elected, he is interested in bringing PASPCR closer to clinicians while strengthening its base in basic science.