Extraordinary Faculty Earn Extraordinary Honors For Teaching And Research

Springtime arrived with a flurry of remarkable awards to faculty in Emory Pathology. At a ceremony in Tokyo on April 18, Professor and Georgia Research Alliance (GRA) Eminent Scholar Max Cooper, MD, was awarded the 2018 Japan Prize in Medicine and Medicinal Sciences for his discovery of B lymphocytes more than 50 years ago. Dr. Cooper shared the prize with Dr. Jacques Miller of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne, Australia, who is credited with discovering T lymphocytes. By identifying those two distinct cell lineages and showing that they each have unique functions but work together to protect the host, Drs. Cooper and Miller revealed the dual cellular basis of acquired immune responses, which stands to this day as one of the most fundamental insights in the history of immunology. Established in 1982 to recognize advances in science or technology that benefit society, the Japan Prize ranks among the world’s most prestigious international scientific awards.

Two weeks earlier, back in Atlanta, Eric Hunter, PhD, was honored with the 2018 Dean’s Distinguished Lectureship, the highest scientific accolade that Emory’s School of Medicine bestows each year. In his lecture on April 4, Dr. Hunter, a renowned virologist whose early work helped illuminate the biology of retroviruses and who is now at the forefront of research on human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), recounted groundbreaking studies of HIV transmission in Rwanda and Zambia that he conducted in collaboration with Professor Susan Allen, MD, MPH, and a host of fellow researchers at Emory and abroad. Those studies helped prove that new HIV infections most commonly result from transmission of a single HIV virus particle, and that genetic properties of such “transmitted founder viruses” strongly influence the subsequent progression of HIV disease. Dr. Hunter has been Professor of Pathology and a GRA Eminent Scholar at Emory since 2004.

Finally, read this and weep: Though he’d retired a few months earlier after achieving rock-star status as a clinician and teacher, our longtime Director of Pathology Education, Professor Charles “Whit” Sewell, MD, was given a special “Lifetime Teaching Award” on April 27 at the Senior Banquet for this year’s graduating medical class. That’s a rare honor but no great surprise: A truly legendary educator, Dr. Sewell has been showered with teaching laurels for the past quarter-century, including the 1994 Evangeline Papa-george Award, the School’s highest teaching honor. But to everyone’s delight, the School also announced creation of the “Charles W. Sewell Award for Excellence in Preclinical Teaching”, which will honor Dr. Sewell’s legacy each year for decades to come.

What could make this story even better? The first-ever recipient of this eponymous award, announced that same evening, is our own Assistant Professor Stewart Neill, MD, a gifted Sewell acolyte and Associate Director of our residency program. By this single act, the School paid tribute to Dr. Sewell’s lifetime of brilliant teaching while also passing the torch to the next generation of distinguished medical educators on our Emory Pathology faculty.

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We’re finally getting all of Dr. Deeb! Though we’ve enjoyed having her with us as a part-time faculty member for the past year, Assistant Professor Kristin Deeb, Ph.D., will go to full-time status on September 1, and we’ll like that even better. There’s plenty for her to do: An expert in both clinical cytogentic and molecular oncology, Dr. Deeb’s versatile skill in developing and interpreting cutting-edge diagnostic tests is already helping to keep Emory at the forefront in cancer treatment, transplantation, and other frontiers of patient care that are sure to keep advancing in the years ahead.

NEW FACULTY —
Kristin Deeb, PhD

She came into the clinical world with a deep background in basic cancer biology that began during her undergraduate years at the University of California in San Diego, continued through her Ph.D training at the University of Buffalo, and culminated in two years of postdoctoral research at the National Cancer Institute, followed by four years as a staff scientist at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in upstate New York. Her research delved deeply into oncogenic signaling pathways, particularly those affected by vitamin D or viral tumor antigens, and gave her hands-on experience with a wide range of cancer types in animal and tissue-culture models. But the dream of applying her skills to the patient-care arena inspired Dr. Deeb to pursue additional training, first in the molecular diagnostics laboratory at Roswell Park, and then through a three-year clinical fellowship in Molecular Genetics and Clinical Cytogenetics at Case Western, which she completed in 2016. All of that has made her an invaluable Co-Director for our own busy Cytogenetics and Molecular Diagnostics laboratories, even on a part-time basis. We can’t wait to see how much more Dr. Deeb accomplishes, now that we’ll have her all to ourselves.

Some of the best pathologists start out as surgeons, which gives them unique perspective and insights that they carry throughout their careers. That’s the route that brought our new head and neck (H&N) pathologist, Assistant Professor Judy Shi, MD, to Emory in early June. Originally from China, she’d earned her MD, completed surgical residency and a Master’s degree, and then spent six years on the faculty in H&N surgery, gaining the rank of Associate Professor, all in her native Shanxi province, before emigrating to the U.S., where she worked initially for nearly a decade in a research laboratory at the University of Minnesota.

But then she retrained and re-invented herself as a pathologist, first by completing a yearlong clinical clerkship at Minnesota, next through combined AP/CP residency at the University of Illinois in Chicago, and then by Cytopathology fellowship at Indiana University. To cap off her training, Dr. Shi then went back to her roots by spending a year as a Clinical Instructor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, focusing on H&N pathology under the tutelage of Dr. Margaret Brandwein-Weber. With that extensive background, and triple Board-certifications, Dr. Shi launched into her second faculty career in 2015, joining the University of Kentucky as an Assistant Professor of Pathology, with responsibilities in surgical and cytopathology, and a heavy emphasis on H&N. When we went searching for someone with exactly those skills, Dr. Shi was the very best candidate, and we were delighted to welcome her onto our faculty. It’s the best possible outcome for everyone: We add another exceptionally skilled and experienced H&N pathologist to our outstanding team at Midtown, and Dr. Shi gets to practice the subspecialty she loves in one of this country’s busiest and most sophisticated H&N services. Best of all, she’s now an Emory pathologist.

NEW FACULTY —
Quiying (Judy) Shi, MD, MS

Emory Pathology has passed a major milestone, ranking among the top 10 departments of its kind in NIH funding for the 10th consecutive year. With $28.2 million in total NIH support, our Department ranked #5 among Pathology departments nationally in 2017, having ranked no lower than #6 for the past decade, including 8 straight years among the top 3. The latest rankings were compiled by the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research, based on data released by the NIH for the 2017 federal fiscal year, which ended on September 30.

Those data take into account direct and indirect funding for research and training grants, but do not include NIH contracts. Emory’s School of Medicine as a whole was ranked #19 among its peers that year, with $241 million in NIH support. A broader measure of awards from all extramural sources, compiled by the School, indicates that 40 of our faculty and trainees were together awarded a total of $43.9 million in 2017.

TEN YEARS IN THE NIH TOP-TEN!

NIH 2017 Top 5 Pathology Departments

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<th>Rank</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>John Hopkins</td>
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Congratulations to everyone in Emory Pathology who helps create an environment where top-tier scholarship can THRIVE!
Guido Silvestri, MD

Professor and GRA Eminent Scholar Guido Silvestri, MD, began a two-year term on July 1st as President of the Scientific Council for France’s National Agency for AIDS and Hepatitis Research (known by its French acronym, ANRS), which is roughly that country’s counterpart of the U.S. NIAID. Dr. Silvestri is a renowned researcher on lentiviral pathogenesis and cure, particularly using non-human primate models, who directs the Microbiology and Immunology Division at Yerkes and also serves as Vice Chair and Director of our Experimental Pathology Division.

Gabriel Sica, MD, PhD

Associate Professor Gabriel Sica, MD, PhD, has been appointed Director of the newly established Cancer Tissue and Pathology Shared Resource of the Winship Cancer Institute. In this role, Dr. Sica, a surgical pathologist-investigator who specializes in lung pathology and has long spearheaded Winship’s tissue-procurement and biobanking services, will oversee the integration of those services with the Research Pathology Core (a joint venture of Winship and our Pathology Department), with expanded investments in personnel and equipment. His new appointment commenced on February 1.

Krisztina Hanley, MD

Associate Professor Krisztina Hanley, MD, is the newest addition to our outstanding residency leadership team. In her new role as Assistant Residency Program Director, which took effect on July 1, she joins Professor and Vice Chair Charlie Hill, MD, PhD, Associate Professor Marina Mosunjac, MD, and Assistant Professor Stewart Neill, MD, at the helm of one of the nation’s largest and best Pathology training programs. A specialist in gynecologic, breast, and cytopathology, Dr. Hanley earned an AP Golden Apple teaching award from our trainees in 2016, and was this year’s recipient of the coveted AnnaLee Boyette Award for her contributions to the residency.

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George Birdsong, MD,

The College of American Pathologists (CAP) will bestow a Lifetime Achievement Award on Professor George Birdsong, MD, honoring his “outstanding contributions and service” to that organization’s Council on Scientific Affairs. Dr. Birdsong is a distinguished cytopathologist and surgical pathologist who is our Director of Anatomic Pathology at Grady Hospital, and is also a past-President of the American Society for Cytopathology. He will receive the award on October 21 at the CAP’s national meeting in Chicago.

Shoichiro Ono, PhD

The Japan Society for the Promotion of Society (JSPS) honored Associate Professor Shoichiro Ono, PhD, with a 2017 JSPS Bridge Prize, in recognition of his “outstanding achievements in research and … dedication to advancing international collaboration between the U.S. and Japan”. Dr. Ono conducts research on cytoskeletal dynamics using the nematode Caenorhabditis elegans as a model. He received the award from the JSPS’s Washington and San Francisco offices at a ceremony on February 3 in Berkeley, California.

Patrice Smith

The Newsletter has a new look, thanks to its new Publisher and Chief Designer, Ms. Patrice Smith. A star of our Department’s research administrative staff since 2016, Patrice’s self-taught computer, graphics, and web-design skill launched her into a brand new role on May 7 as Pathology’s first-ever Communications Specialist, with artistic and technical responsibilities for all our Departmental websites, newsletters, teleconferencing, and social media presence, too.
Introducing the Pathology Trainee Wellness Committee

Established in January of 2018, co-chairs Melanie Wooten MD (trainee) and Carla Ellis MD, MS (faculty) are proud to introduce and provide updates on the activities and progress of the departmental Trainee Wellness Committee!

A subcommittee of the Program Evaluation Committee, the Trainee Wellness Committee originated partly as the result of a new requirement from the ACGME to ensure that residency training programs have appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure that wellness and burnout prevention resources are available and accessible to residents and other post graduate trainees (fellows).

Carla, Melanie and the remainder of the committee (see list below) enthusiastically sprang into action to plan a calendar of events for the remainder of the year that embody the eight tenants of wellness (social, occupational, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical, environmental, financial) and mirrored the efforts of other well established wellness programs throughout Emory University and nationwide.

WELLNESS TIP
For fast focus, sit in a comfortable place, breathe naturally, and settle your attention on your breath, says Sharon Salzberg, author of Real Happiness: The Power of Meditation. With each inhale and exhale, mentally repeat the words “in” and “out.” If your mind wanders, just let go without judgment, and bring your attention back to it.

Events have included visiting a “Stranger Things” experience, a bowling night, “March Mindfulness” - a month dedicated to mindful and wellness-driven activities, a pathology board exam potluck send-off, as well as an afternoon of chair massages to help relieve the stress from long hours of grossing and sitting at the microscope. We also welcomed our incoming intern class with tickets to the Atlanta United FC soccer game. We provide healthy snacks for our trainees in the resident’s room, and we have many more exciting events planned for this year!

Future goals include a wellness link on the department website, community/philanthropic efforts and collaborative efforts on wellness initiatives in other departments throughout the Emory School of Medicine.

Wellness Committee Members: Carla Ellis, MD MS; Melanie Wooten, MD PGY-4; Charlie Hill, MD PhD; Stewart Neill, MD; Serita Phillips; Lynn Hansen; Elliott Burdette, MD PGY-4; Jenna Wade, MD PGY-3; Taylor Doane, MD PGY-2; Bryan Morales, MD PGY-1; Kyle Bradley, MD; Brian Webber, MD; Melinda Lewis, MD; and John Roback, MD PhD

well·ness /welnas/
noun
1. Wellness is an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life. Wellness is more than being free from illness, it is a dynamic process of change and growth.
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