University of Nebraska Medical Center

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Issue 23

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Tom Jerrells is Recipient of Joint $6 Million Grant

(Dr. Thomas Jerrells)

A collaborative effort between the University of Iowa and Thomas Jerrells, Ph.D., UNMC Professor of Pathology and Microbiology, has resulted in a joint five-year, $6.3 million grant from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, one of the National Institutes of Health. Robert Cook, M.D., Ph.D., University of Iowa Professor of Pathology and Director of Clinical Laboratories at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Iowa City, is the coordinator of the grant.

The University of Iowa researchers will receive $4.85 million and UNMC will receive nearly $1.5 million to conduct studies of the immune system abnormalities caused by chronic alcohol abuse. According to Dr. Jerrells, "the research in our lab is designed to define how the immune system response to viral infections

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Bioterrorism Grant Funded

(Phyllis Muellenberg)

Phyllis Muellenberg, MA, MT (ASCP), Director of the UNMC Medical Technology Program, recently learned that her proposal for a unique, collaborative effort among faculty from SAHP (nine allied health programs), the Colleges of Medicine, Pharmacy, and Nursing, and the Public Health graduate program has been approved for a two-year, $700,000 grant. The purpose of the grant will be to develop educational materials on bioterrorism and public health emergency preparedness. The funding will be used to develop bioterrorism-related curricula, which will benefit all UNMC students and may be used by students nationally.

Approval of the funding was announced by Tommy Thompson, the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. UNMC was one of only 12 universities nationwide to receive the curriculum-development funding.

UNMC was awarded $363,777 on September 12th, according to Ms. Muellenberg. Year 2 funding will be in the amount of $338,286. With the funding, UNMC plans to develop eight modules – an overview and seven topic-specific course modules – that can be tailored to students in specific programs.

Other members of the School of Allied Health and the Department of Pathology and Microbiology will participate in this project, as well. Dr. Jim Booth will serve as faculty/co-investigator. Susan Langdon, MT (ASCP) DLM, will serve as the full-time project manager. Beth Letheby, MS, MT (ASCP) will provide Blackboard course and database development support for this project.

Letter from the Chair


(Dr. Sam Cohen)

Dr. Stanley Robbins, the originator of the textbook, *Pathologic Basis of Disease*, recently died. His textbook revolutionized the teaching of pathology to medical students by incorporating pathobiology and clinical relevance to accompany the morphologic description of diseases. After Dr. Robbins' retirement, Dr. Ramzi Cotran took over the editorship of this textbook. Unfortunately, Dr. Cotran died a few years ago; the baton has been passed to his successor, Dr. Vinay Kumar. Although the volume has evolved as a multi-authored textbook, it remains the cornerstone of pathology education for medical students. It is amazing that the entire textbook at one time was written entirely by Dr. Robbins, partly as a result of his incredible notes for lectures that he presented to students in Boston.

Education is the fundamental mission of our department, and forms the cornerstone around which a university medical center is organized. We are fortunate to have several outstanding educators in our department, several of whom have received major awards from the students and from their faculty peers, not only within the College of Medicine, but within the medical center as a whole and from the entire University of Nebraska system. We are particularly proud of the recent university-wide award received by our medical technology program for the Outstanding Teaching program at the University.

The Durham Research Center will soon be completed, including a beautiful new lecture hall that will be the site of lectures for the second year medical students, the major focus of our department's educational efforts in the College of Medicine. There will also be several small classrooms utilized by the medical students for small group discussions and other educational activities.

Beginning in January, 2004, we will be pursuing many of our department's educational activities in this new structure. We will continue building on the fundamental foundation for pathology education established by Stan Robbins nearly 50 years ago, with a focus on the contribution of pathology to clinical medicine. Stan Robbins and Ramzi Cotran were giants in pathology and medical education. I was fortunate to have known both of them personally, and both will be missed dearly.

UNMC Receives $2.5 Million

The U.S. Congress approved an appropriation bill from the Department of Defense that, pending President Bush's approval, will provide UNMC with $2.5 million to develop portable and networked automation testing technology that would process specimens to detect the existence of biological agents in the event of a biological attack.

Dr. Rodney Markin, Professor and Vice Chair in the Department of Pathology and Microbiology, President and CEO of University Medical Associates, and Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs, is also founder and chairman of the board of LAB-Interlink, a UNMC technology transfer company that designs and manufactures automated laboratory technology. According to Dr. Markin, the funding "would enable UNMC to develop the technology to enhance our country's Homeland Security, as well as the safety of our troops in battlefield conditions."


(Dr. Rodney Markin)

According to Dr. Markin, the automated laboratory technology provides UNMC with the tools it needs to perform mass screenings of people in the event of a bioterrorism incident. The screenings could be done 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The system is capable of testing 1,000 specimens an hour, or 24,000 specimens a day.

The automated laboratory system is portable enough that, in the event of a bioterrorism attack, such as the release of the smallpox virus, the automated laboratory system could be transported to the site of the attack within hours. The system could even be run and monitored by remote control which would "minimize the potential exposure to any harmful agents and create a level of bio-safety that you wouldn't have with other laboratory systems," according to Dr. Markin.

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To profit from good advice requires more wisdom than to give it.

–John Churton Collins

Dennis Weisenburger Named One of America's Best Doctors


(Dr. Dennis Weisenburger)

Dennis Weisenburger, M.D., was among 13 UNMC physicians to be named one of "America's Top Doctors," according to the latest edition of a national guide published annually by Castle Connolly Medical Ltd. The doctors are selected through a peer nomination process. Of more than 650,000 physicians nationwide, only about 4,000 physicians are ultimately included in the guide.

Dr. Weisenburger is a Professor in the Department of Pathology and Microbiology, and the Director of the Hematopathology Fellowship Program.

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Dr. Abrahams Joins Department


(Dr. Neil Abrahams)

Neil A. Abrahams, M.D., is the newest faculty member of the Department of Pathology and Microbiology. Dr. Abrahams joined the department on August 13, 2003, arriving from a recently completed fellowship at M.D. Anderson Medical Center. Dr. Abrahams specializes in nephropathology.

Dr. Abrahams' office is located on the north campus. He will be involved in clinical pathology and teaching of students and residents. Special congratulations go out to Dr. Abrahams and his wife, Marilyn. Shortly after arriving in Omaha from Houston, he and his wife welcomed their second child, Lauren. They also have a three-year-old son, Nicholas.

Lab Passes CAP Inspection

On September 16-17th, The Nebraska Medical Center Clinical Laboratory underwent an accreditation inspection performed by the College of American Pathologists (CAP). This also included a concurrent inspection of our blood transfusion service by the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB). A team of 21 inspectors led by a team from the University of Massachusetts Health Sciences Center spent 2 days reviewing our policies and procedures, inspecting our facilities and equipment, and interviewing our managers and staff, as well as hospital administrators and medical staff leadership. During the summation conference, the inspection team leader, Dr. Guy Vallaro, stated that "The Nebraska Medical Center has a laboratory that they can be truly proud of." He further reported that he and his team had found several useful practices and procedures that they were going to be taking back to use in their laboratory. As a result of this inspection we anticipate full accreditation of the clinical laboratory to continue for another two year period. Special thanks for this success goes to the managers, lead technologists and a special note of appreciation goes to Karen Hansen who spent many hours updating policies and procedures in advance of the inspection.

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UMA Clinics Receive COLA Award

The UMA Clinics in the Durham Outpatient Care Building are recipients of COLA's Laboratory Excellence Award that recognizes those laboratories that demonstrate exemplary patient testing. COLA's Laboratory Excellence Award is bestowed on COLA laboratories that complete an on-site survey and are found to have superior laboratory safety and practices for their patients. In addition, award recipients must have demonstrated successful proficiency testing for the prior three testing events and have no valid complaints against the laboratory. COLA is a nonprofit organization approved by the federal government that accredits physician offices and clinic laboratories. Coordination of preparation efforts for the survey and ongoing support to the clinics is provided by Cheryl Churchill, coordinator and consultant in the clinical lab. Congratulations to Cheryl and the UMA DOC clinic

New Hires:

Neil Abrahams – Assistant Professor – 8/13/03

Anser Azim, Instructor – 10/1/03

Alyssa Bouska – Graduate Assistant – 8/25/03

Michael Burrows – Graduate Assistant – 8/20/03

Tammy Carey – Staff Medical Technologist – 10/27/03

Jami Carrell – Laboratory Assistant – 8/25/03

Jesse Chrastil – Research Technologist I – 8/12/03

Muralidhar Deshpande – Postdoc Research Assoc – 8/31/03

Alok Dhar – Postdoc Research Associate – 9/1/03

Brenton Ellison – Research Technologist I – 8/18/03

Marti Emrick – Grants Accountant – 10/14/03

Mitsuru Futakuchi – Postdoc Research Associate – 8/1/03

Amber Gillham – Laboratory Assistant - 9/03

Allen Gindulis – Laboratory Assistant – 9/22/03

Marcy Gregory – Medical Transcriptionist – 9/03

Erika Guzman – Laboratory Assistant – 8/13/03

Ruth Hagemann – Research Technologist I – 8/18/03

Toby Hardiman – Laboratory Assistant – 8/25/03

Irena Kadiu – Graduate Assistant – 8/25/03

Chad Laurie – Graduate Student Fellow – 8/25/03

Tam Le – Other Hourly Worker – 8/14/03

Laura Marsha – Research Technologist II – 8/27/03

Rhonda Noel – Staff Medical Technologist - 9/03

Christine Peters – Clerical Associate – 10/20/03

S. Anne Ratashak – Research Technologist II – 8/11/03

Martha Rhoades – Graduate Assistant – 8/25/03

Kathie Rogers – Graduate Student Fellow – 8/20/03

Becky Simon – Laboratory Assistant – 8/25/03

Adam Safford – Laboratory Assistant – 9/22/03

Justin Zabrocki – Laboratory Assistant - 8/18/03

Collen Yates – Staff Medical Technologist 9/03

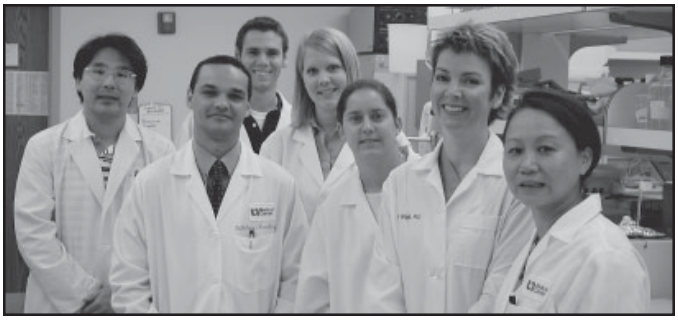
We confide in our strength, without boasting of it;
We respect that of others, without fearing it.

– Thomas Jefferson

Dr. Abrahams Receives CAP/ Abbott Lab Award

Every year the College of American Pathologists Foundation and Abbott Laboratories give up to 9 awards to support one, two or three months of advanced training in evolving and emerging technologies, such as molecular diagnostics, that are expected to have an impact on pathology practice.

Nine residents/fellows were selected for this award in 2003. Dr. Neil Abrahams was one of the recipients. The award was granted for a two month period for training in Solid Tumor Cytogenetics, FISH and molecular diagnostic testing under the supervision of Dr. Julia Bridge at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC).



(From L to R: Jun Nishio, Neil Abrahams, Stuart Bridge, Jacque Bailey, Pam Altof, Julia Bridge, Ming Zhou)

During the two month period that Dr. Abrahams was an award recipient, he worked closely with the Cytogenetics Laboratory at UNMC. This laboratory has been involved in solid tumor cytogenetic studies as well as the application of fluorescent in-situ hybridization (FISH) in the diagnosis and management of solid tumors for over 15 years. Recently the Molecular Cytogenetics Laboratory has been involved in the clinical evaluation of a multi-target FISH assay for bladder cancer. Dr. Abrahams has recently completed his fellowship in genitourinary pathology at MD Anderson Cancer Center, and the award allowed him to focus on the application of cytogenetic and molecular diagnostic techniques to the study of tumors of the genitourinary system.

Techniques that Dr. Abrahams was exposed to during his rotation included karyotyping of conventional

(Continued on Page 8)

Grants Awarded:

Eric Anderson, M.A., Synaptic Transmission in HIV-1 Associated Dementia. Awarded by: DHHS/NIH/NINDS. 9/1/03 – 8/31/04 - $29,198.

Julia Bridge, M.D., Soft Tissue Sarcoma Committee. Awarded by: National Childhood Cancer Foundation. 3/1/03 – 2/29/04 - $63,629.

Julia Bridge, M.D., Urine Collection for Use in Validation of Extended Applications of the UroVysion Kit. Awarded by: Abbott Laboratories. 8/1/03 – 7/31/05 - $37,041.

Steve Carson, Ph.D., Junction Adhesion Molecule CAR and the Immune System. Awarded by: DHHS/NIH/NIAID. 9/5/03 – 12/31/03 - $66,450.

John Chan, M.D., Molecular Classification of B-Cell Lymphoma. Awarded by: DHHS/NIH/NCI. 9/23/03 – 3/31/04 - $728,949.

John Chan, M.D., Epstein-Barr Virus and Breast Cancer. Awarded by: U.S. Army. 9/1/03 – 8/31/04 - $147,000.

Nora Chapman, Ph.D., Enterovirus Persistence in Myocarditis. Awarded by: DHHS/NIH/NIAID. 9/17/03 – 9/16/04 - $73,500.

Howard Gendelman, M.D., Blood Brain Barrier Physiology and HIV Dementia. Awarded by: DHHS/NIH/NINDS. 7/1/03 – 6/30/04 - $376,210.

Howard Gendelman, M.D., Experimental Therapeutic Strategies for ALS. Awarded by: NIH through Columbia University. 2/1/03 – 12/31/03 - $67,647.

Howard Gendelman, M.D., Neural Immunity in HIV Dementia. Awarded by: DHHS/NIH/NINDS. 5/15/03 – 4/30/04 - $1,203,933.

Steven Hinrichs, M.D., Bioterrorism Laboratory Services Agreement. Awarded by: Nebraska DHHS. 7/1/02 – 6/30/04 - $412,572.

Thomas Jerrells, Ph.D., The Role of Immune Responses in Alcoholic Liver Diseases. Awarded by: DHHS/NIH/ NIAAA. 8/8/03 – 6/30/04 - $294,000.

Thomas Jerrells, Ph.D., A Role for Viral Infection in Alcoholic Pancreatitits. Awarded by: DHHS/NIH/NIAAA. 8/1/03 – 7/31/04 - $142,300.

Grants Awarded

(Continued from Column 1)

Kyung-Soo Kim, Ph.D., Defective Interfering Coxsackieviruses in Human and Murine Myocarditis. Awarded by: American Heart Association. 7/1/03 – 6/30/04 - $45,616.

R. Lee Mosley, Ph.D., SPECT Evaluation of GBR 12909 Inhibition of b-CIT/Dopamine Transporter (DAT) Interactions. Awarded by: Pfizer, Inc. 8/5/03 – 5/4/04. - $28,000.

Yuri Persidsky, M.D., Ph.D., Effect of Alcohol on HIV-1 Immune Responses & BBB Damage. Awarded by: DHHS/NIH/NIAAA. 8/1/03 – 7/31/04 - $294,000.

James Talmadge, Ph.D., UNMC Eppley Cancer Center Support Grant. Awarded by: DHHS/NIH/NCI. 2/1/03 – 1/31/05 - $250,000.

Steven Tracy, Ph.D., Inoculation of Neonatal NOD Mice with Coxsackievirus B3: Is Later IDDM Suppressed? Awarded by: American Diabetes Association. 7/1/03 – 6/30/04 - $50,000.

Jialin Zheng, M.D., Macrophage Activation, Chemokines and HIV Dementia. Awarded by: DHHS/NIH/NINDS. 5/1/03 – 4/30/04 - $8,428.

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Upcoming Symposium

The Thomas A. Seemayer, M.D., Educational Symposium willl be held on Friday, November 14, 2003 in the College of Nursing Amphitheater.

Guest speakers include Dr. Christian Nezelof, from Paris, France, speaking on "From Histiocytosis X to Langerhaus Cell Histiocytosis: A Still Moving Story;" Dr. Wayne Lapp, from Montreal, Canada, speaking on "Graft -versus - Host Disease: The Thymus Connection and Beyond;" Dr. Walter Schurch, from Montreal, Canada, speaking on "Myofibro-blast in Neoplasia;" Dr. Jean Pierre de Chadaravian, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, speaking on "Ten Years to Make a Diagnosis;" and Dr. Robert Bolande from Pineville, North Carolina, speaking on "The Neurocristopathies."

Please mark your calendars for this special event.

Graduate Program Information

On July 1, 2003, new members were appointed to the Graduate Committee for the Department of Pathology and Microbiology. The committee members now include:

- Nora Chapman, Ph.D., Chair
- Steven Carson, Ph.D.
- Paul Fey, Ph.D.
- Tsuneya Ikezu, M.D., Ph.D.
- Thomas Jerrells, Ph.D.
- Donald Johnson, Ph.D.
- Rakesh Singh, Ph.D.

The Graduate Students, their Programs and Advisors for the 2003 Summer/Fall Session Are:

- Valerie Piening, - M.S. – (Dr. Hua Xiao)
- Beth Schweitzer – M.S. (Dr. Peter Iwen)
- Alyssa Bouska – Ph.D. (Rotations)
- Michael Burrows – Ph.D. (Rotations)
- Marissa Carstens – Ph.D. (Dr. Kay-Uwe Wagner)
- Michael Dempsey – Ph.D. (Dr. Steven Hinrichs)
- Jessica Gardner – Ph.D. (Dr. Anuja Ghorpade)
- Xiaolu Huang – BIO/Ph.D. (Dr. Hesham Ali)
- Janel Johnson – Ph.D. (Dr. Angie Rizzino)
- Chris Ramey – BIO/Ph.D. (Rotations)
- Kathie Rogers – Ph.D. (Dr. Paul Fey)
- Jarrod Tremayne – Ph.D. (Dr. Tony Hollingsworth)
- Brian Boer – M.D./Ph.D. (Dr. Angie Rizzino)

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Congratulations

Nick Markin participated in the College of Medicine's White Coat ceremony, signifying his start in medical school, on August 22, 2003. Nick is the son of Dr. and Mrs. Rodney and Annette Markin. Dr. Markin is the Vice Chair in the Department of Pathology and Microbiology.

Christian Johansson, Dr. Sonny Johansson's son and a Harvard Business School graduate, was appointed Executive Vice President of the Greater Baltimore Alliance.

Graduate Student Defenses Presented

Frank SotoLeon , M.S., presented his Master's Defense on August 1, 2003. His adviser is Dr. Iqbal Ahmad. The title of his thesis was: Lysophosphatidic Acid Promotes Proliferation and Survival of Retinal Stem Cells/ Progenitors. Franks's future plans include attending Creighton Medical School.

(Frank SotoLeon)

(Michael Dixon)

Michael Dixon, Ph.D., presented his doctoral defense on August 6, 2003. His Advisor was Dr. Robert Lahue. The title of his thesis was: "Genetic Instability of Trinucleotide Repeats in Yeast."

Michael's future plans include becoming a faculty liaison and technology transfer associate in Intellectual Property at UNMC.

Karl Kohlgraf, Ph.D. presented his doctoral defense on August 8, 2003. His advisor was Dr. M.A. Hollingsworth. The title of his thesis was: "Contribution of The Tandem Repeat and Cytoplasmic Tail Domains of MUC1 to Anti-tumor Immunity and Metastatic Potential of Tumors." Karl's future plans include attending the University of Iowa.

(Karl Kohlgraf)

Nils Went-Sumegi, M.S. (Bioinformatics), presented his Master's Defense on August 22, 2003. His advisor was Dr. Donald Johnson. His future plans include becoming a researcher at the department of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at Cincinnati's Children's Hospital Medical Center.

Dr. Abrahams Receives CAP Award *(Continued from Page 5)*

specimens using an enhanced imaging software program (Cytovision NT Brightfield Karyotyping), spectral karyotyping (SKY) which allows the simultaneous visualization of all human chromosomes in 24 different colors using a SkyVision spectral imaging system, and the preparation and analysis of urine specimens from patients with bladder cancer using fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) with probes from a UroVysion kit distributed by Vysis Labs (Abbott Laboratories).

Finally, during the rotation, Dr. Bridge and Dr. Abrahams collaborated on a large study of cytogenetic abnormalities of renal cell carcinoma and their prognostic implications (metastatic potential). This ongoing study has collected, to date, greater than 38 cases with documented cytogenetic abnormalities and will continue. The preliminary data is being collected and will be presented, if successful, as an abstract at the next USCAP meeting.

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Honors & Awards

Linda Fell, MS, MT (ASCP)SH, Associate Program Director in the Division of Medical Technology, has been elected to the Board of Directors of the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP). She will serve a two-year term in her position as Chair Elect and Chair of the Associate Council of ASCP.

(Linda Fell)

(Konnie Zeitner)

Konnie Zeitner, HT, was recently appointed the Editorial Advisory Board for the *ADVANCE for Medical Laboratory Professionsals* magazine. This is the only news magazine in the field to link laboratory professionals in all disciplines encompassing the industry.

$6 Million Grant Awarded

(Continued from Page 2)

damages the liver and the role of alcohol abuse in the severity of the infections. Hepatitis C virus infections are severe in humans who abuse alcohol, but the mechanisms of the interactions of alcohol abuse and how the virus causes damage are not identified."

Dr. Cook, from the University of Iowa, believes that the development of a new animal model will allow the research team to investigate the immune system changes caused by chronic alcohol exposure. Dr. Jerrells' laboratory will use this model, as well as cell culture studies, to investigate the effect of chronic alcohol abuse on various cellular components of the immune system, including T-cells, B-cells, dendritic cells, monocytes and natural killer cells. Each of these cells plays a different role in fighting infectious disease.

Dr. Jerrells hope that the "data obtained from these studies will provide ideas of how to intervene in these serious consequences of alcohol abuse by humans."

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Computer Tips & Tricks

Reminder – when saving important computer documents and files: The best place to store critical data is on the Path2 server. The server is backed up nightly and is well maintained. The worse place to store documents is on a removable disk like a floppy or zip drive. Floppy and zip disks have a finite life and are likely to go bad someday, resulting in the data being lost forever. Saving on your computer's hard drive is also a gamble. If your hard drive dies, or something happens to your computer, the data is gone. If you have any questions about how to access the server, space limitations, etc., email Jeff Annin at jannin@unmc.edu.

Also, Jeff will be coming around during the next few months doing a mandatory upgrade on all computers to Lotus Notes 6.

Finally, please remember, if you have a computer problem, please contact the Help Desk at ext. 97700, rather than contacting Jeff directly.

Handling the West Nile Virus Epidemic

Increasing laboratory capability and capacity from 200 to 2000 diagnostic tests per week, a team effort.

Epidemiological evidence gathered following the spread of West Nile Virus (WNV) throughout the USA has shown that typically the second and third years have been the most severe for states encountering the presence of WNV. Last year all human serological testing for WNV antibodies of Nebraskans was done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), other state public health laboratories, or private commercial laboratories outside the state. Because of numerous problems, it was decided that the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory (NPHL), in a coordinated effort with the epidemiology department at the Nebraska Health and Human Services System (NHHSS), would perform serological testing for West Nile Virus (WNV) IgM antibody. It was felt that in-state testing by the NPHL, handled through Regional Pathology Associates (RPA) Client Services performed in the serology department in The Nebraska Medical Center Clinical Microbiology Laboratory, would allow the state epidemiologists to circumvent previous test-result reporting problems by utilizing the web-based Public Health Laboratory Information Program (PHLIP), thus being able to more readily track the spread of WNV in our state through real-time electronic reporting.

The testing methodology used was that of a solid-phase IgM capture ELISA assay that would allow for 80 specimens to be run in a 96 well microtiter plate. Analyte specific reagents (ASR) used were the same reagents that the CDC recommended and that Mayo Clinic and other reference laboratories used in previous years.

As with any new test brought into the laboratory, planning for the anticipated volume of testing is critical in outlining the patterns of workflow necessary to complete the task in an acceptable length of time. Test turn-around-time (TAT) is an important issue when these results are critical in treating a patient or planning public health intervention. The decision was made to develop this test on an automated system used for other serological tests that used ELISA-based methodology, to batch specimens, and to perform testing twice per week.

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Handling the West Nile Virus Epidemic *(Continued from Column 1)*

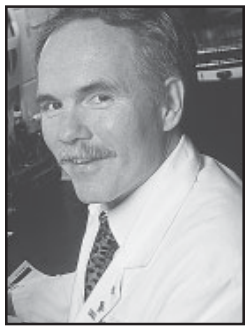
The NPHL began specimen testing in early to mid-June. During the first several weeks the volume was low, less than 200 per week. This strategy worked well until mid to late July when the WNV epidemic hit Nebraska and the rest of the midwest extremely hard. Specimen volume went from less than 200 per week to 600 per week, to a one-day high of nearly 1,000!

As the number of specimens started to increase sharply, weekly and then daily team meetings with RPA Client Services personnel, Clinical Laboratory personnel and members of the NPHL were held to review and coordinate changes necessary to positively impact critical workflow issues. The entire "process" related to specimen receiving, test ordering, laboratory testing strategy and finally reporting of test results to all necessary health officials including ordering physician, ordering facility, and local and state health officials, was analyzed to understand the bottlenecks that were causing restrictions of the workflow and decreased turn around time for the tests.

Changes made to the process were incremental at first, but as the season reached its peak, magnitudinal changes were necessary to handle the marked increase seen in the volume of specimens received, including longer shifts, addition of temporary staff, additional receiving area and computer workstations, weekend runs, a second machine purchased, and automated electronic mining and reporting of results of NHHSS.

Through a coordinated team effort involving staff at RPA Client Services, The Medical Center Clinical Microbiology-Serology Department and the NPHL, resulting from many meetings that analyzed the entire process of specimen testing, successful handling of the marked increase in specimens during the epidemic period was accomplished. The Nebraska Medical Center was successful in handling the increased specimen testing volume and, to date, has tested over 11,000 serum and CSF specimens from people living throughout the state. This allowed for the timely release of critical test results to health care providers. The recording of the lessons learned from this naturally occurring epidemic will certainly help us prepare for a man-made event or for another naturally occurring event.

Biosafety Program at UNMC


(Dr. Peter Iwen)

The biosafety program at UNMC was recently enhanced by the hiring of Peter Iwen, Ph.D., Associate Professor in Pathology and Microbiology as the campus biosafety officer. This program is being coordinated through the Division of Research and Regulatory Affairs in the Academic Affairs office. The duties of the biosafety officer, as described in the NIH Guidelines, includes the periodic inspections of laboratories to ensure safety standards are followed, the development of an emergency plan for handling biohazardous spills, and as a source for advice on laboratory security and safety. Additionally, Dr. Iwen has been given the task of developing a campus-wide biosafety training program and to act as the Responsible Official on campus to direct and monitor the Select Agent Program, which involves the utilization of biological agents in research that are considered the most likely to be used by bioterrorists. Numerous activities have been initiated to fulfill these duties, including the development of a web-based biosafety training program and the commencement of laboratory inspections for individuals filing Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) protocols. As an ex officio member of the IBC, Dr. Iwen works closely with the IBC chair Oksana Lockridge, Ph.D., to monitor research activities involving biohazardous agents. This collaboration helps to identify those laboratories where biohazardous agents are utilized that require periodic inspections and the individuals who work in these areas that require biosafety training.

As the Responsible Official for the Select Agent Program, Dr. Iwen has been working with the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and of Agriculture to fulfill the new mandates outlined in federal law 42 CFR Part 73. Recently, a team of representatives from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention was on campus to evaluate our Select Agent Program as part of the process for the University to receive a Certificate of Registration to be allowed to do research involving the use of select agents. This process is a necessity for many of the programs on campus to continue, including the collaborative tularemia projects

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Biosafety Program at UNMC

(Continued from Column 1)

with colleagues at UNL. The UNMC campus was one of the first institutions in the country to undergo this audit process.

As the Biosafety Officer, Dr. Iwen will also participate in the commissioning of laboratories in the Durham Research Center prior to occupation by the research groups. This process will be done to ensure that the laboratories are designed for their intended purpose and comply with federal standards for research involving biohazardous agents. This process has begun and will continue as the laboratories are completed.

The overall goal of the biosafety program is to make this a safer campus to do research and to conduct business. Any questions or comments concerning the biosafety program are welcomed and can be directed to either Dr. Iwen at piwen@unmc.edu or to Dr. Lockridge at olockrid@unmc.edu. Additional information can also be found on the IBC web site at http://www.unmc.edu/ibc/.

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Visiting Faculty

The department would like to welcome the following visiting faculty:


(Dr. Sherif Ahmed)

Dr. Sherif al-Kotb Ahmed, arrived from Egypt on September 15th. He joined the Hemato-pathology group as a Visiting Research Associate. Dr. Ahmed is a consultant in hematopathology at the Maadi Hospital in Cairo. He will return to Egypt at the end of this year.


(Dr. Carlos Montero)

Dr. Carlos Montero joined the department as a Visiting Research Associate on October 27th. He will be working in the Nebraska Medical Center Transfusion and Transplantation Laboratory with Dr. James Landmark. Dr. Montero is joined by his wife, Lourdes, and their two children Samuel and Maria. They will be here in Omaha for the next year.

Happy Birthday To:

August

8/1 - Dianna Bannister
Rakesh Singh
Abbie Sorensen
8/2 - Eleanor Sigafoose
8/3 - Donna Gombold
Cindy Hunter
Marnie Imhoff
Julie Muller
8/4 - Jennifer Francke
Julia Gulizia
Maria Ihrig
Jean Lauer
8/5 – J. Smith Leser
8/6 - Vakara Meyer
8/8 - Milissa Gerken
Nancy Shimerdla
Beth Schweitzer
Barb Switzer
Huangui Xiong
8/9 - Joel Knopik
8/11 - Keith Young
8/12 - Troy Matthias
8/13 - Nathan Butler
Annette Nared
8/14 – Jean Filbey
Chad Marshall
8/16 - Rhonda Gagliolo
Kathleen Trudell
8/17 - Julia Bridge
8/20 - Stephanie Tabaka
8/21 - Lisa Cornet
William West
8/23 - Matthew Backora
Mary Parsons
8/24 - Dave McKenzie
Gayla Carter
8/25 - Catherine Gebhart
James McCoy
8/26 - Kirsten Stites
8/27 - Verna Katzenstein
8/28 - Rodney McComb
S. Anne Ratashak
8/29 - Vicki Herrera
Sarah Schrad
8/30 - Cindy Hardesty
Lacey Petrina
Steve Tracy

September

9/1 - Erika Guzman
9/3 - Dave Varga
9/7 - Rebecca Digiacinto
Deanna Grasmick
Robin Hartley
9/8 - Lawan Ali
James Haorah
Deb Hotz
Paul Lux
9/9 - Scott Smith
9/12 - Jodeen Jones
9/14 - Marilynn Larson
Thomas Seemayer
9/15 - Penny Sanders
9/16 - Diana Acero
James Buescher
9/17 - Sandra Irons
9/19 - George Bamsey
James Landmark
Deseyre Magee
9/20 - Santhi Gorantla
9/23 - Michelle Varney
9/24 - Sam Cohen
Ann Conces
9/25 - Janice Jerrells
9/26 - Darby Carlson
Jesse Chrastil
9.27 - Timothy Goodwin
9/28 - Tuire Cechin
9/29 - Barb Johnson
Barbara Miller
Becky Nattermann
Heather Ross
Mindy Winkelman
9/30 - Tim Greiner
Pat Koso
James Wisecarver

October

10/1 - Susan Anson
10/2 - Yulei Shen
Terry Staley
10/3 - Amy Kapels
Nick Markin
10/5 - Kathleen Greer
10/6 - John Glock
Anne Rice
Kaye Shepard
10/7 - Steven Campbell
Kathy DeWitt
10/8 - Karen Keller
Adam Stafford
10/9 - Nancy Abraham
Brian Anderson
Stan Radio
Earline Titsworth
10/10 - Eric Anderson
Rochelle Gordon
10/11 - John Chan
Jim Gulizia
Elizabeth Hartwell
10/12 - Herninia Kyamko
10/13 - Ronald Daly
10/14 - Scott Kurz
10/15 - Myhanh Che
Val Henry
10/16 - Debbie Vidlak
Sandy Wiese
10/17- Kathleen Borgmann
10/18 - Brent Keenportz
Joan Mares
10/20 - Yunlong Huang
10/21 - Beth Avery
James Linder
Kim Mathewson
Conisha Page
10/22 - Kellie Neth
Eric Schriner
10/23 - Lori Akers
Leslie Bruch
Sophia Hauxwell
10/24 - Geoffrey Talmon
Jialin Zheng
10/25 - Jolene Jones
Brian Lenz
Ken Young
10/26 - Melissa French
Cynthia Page
10/27 - Sonny Johansson
10/29 - Sara Doukas
Tom McDonald
10/30 - Christopher Ramey
10/31 - Scott Koepsell
Paula Bartee-Williams


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