

PCD NEWSLETTER

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Director's Corner

Dear members of the Division of Precision and Computational Diagnostics (PCD),



Welcome to the nineteenth issue of our Divisional Newsletter. We are excited to welcome three new members to our division. Mary Kuforiji and Monika Carey join the Center for Personalized Diagnostics (CPD) as technologists, and Sanese White-Brown joins the CPD as a Variant Analyst.

While our division is ever growing and changing, often welcoming new employees, while saying goodbye to others, (like Carmela Paolillo, who moved home to Italy to pursue an assistant professorship), we are very lucky to have faculty like Dr. Van Deerlin, who just celebrated 25 years of service to Penn Medicine. Read more about both of them on page 2.

The holidays were a joyous time for members of the PCD, as evident in the many celebrations which took place leading up to the new year. You can see pictures of smiling faces and summaries of various activities from all of this season's social events, including a giving campaign for those in need, which members of our division participated in, on pages 3 and 4.

Additional items covered in this issue include highlights from various events attended by PCD Faculty and the outcome of the PCD Fantasy Football Battle Royale. There is plenty to look forward to in the coming months! Be sure to read up on the upcoming lab week, and PCD social committee activities.

With the new year comes new opportunities as well as new challenges. May we seize each opportunity with fervor and face each challenge with determination to ultimately move forward in our missions.

Kojo Elenitoba-Johnson, MD

Lab Week 2020



The calendar may read February, but in a few short months, Lab Week 2020 will be here and a week full of events and activities will commence. This year's Lab Week theme is "Fellowship of the Lab: One Team to Diagnose Them All" and will take place April 20th through April 24th. Events will include a department-wide luncheon, door decorating and dessert contests, Bingo, basket raffles and a gift for all staff and faculty, just to name a few. So mark your calendars now, and get ready for another fun-filled week recognizing our Medical Laboratory Professionals.

Welcome

Mary Kuforiji



Mary is a new technologist for the Center for Personal Diagnostics.

Mary received her Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies from University of Washington, and a Post Bachelor in Biomedical Science from Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. She transitioned from pharmaceutical to healthcare in 2012 and came from a Hahnemann University Hospital CLIA microbiology lab. She was in that position for 7 years. Prior to that, she was with the cloning and DNA sequencing group at GlaxoSmithKline and Pharmacogenomic group at Sanofi Aventis. Her hobbies include gardening and hiking.

Sanese White-Brown



Sanese is a new Genomic Variant Analyst for the Center for Personal Diagnostics.

Sanese received her Bachelor of Science in Biology with a minor in Chemistry from Delaware State University in 2008, and a Masters in Cell and Developmental Biology from Rutgers in 2012. Since then she has worked in the field of Molecular Pathology/ NGS in positions such as Clinical Support/ NGS Data scientist and Molecular data Specialist in labs throughout the Greater Philadelphia Area. She has an extensive research background and is a cited author in multiple scientific publications. In her free time, Sanese enjoys volunteering as a Big Sister with the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program and as a domestic violence advocate with WomanSpace. She really enjoys cooking and baking.

Monika Carey



Monika is a new technologist for the Center for Personal Diagnostics.

Monika graduated from Stockton University with a Bachelor of Science in Biology. Since then, she has worked at Medical Diagnostic Laboratories in their Next Generation Sequencing Lab before making the decision to come to Penn! In her free time, she usually enjoys going to the gym. When she isn't in the lab or at the gym, she bartends in Long Beach Island, NJ on the weekends! She loves to keep busy!

NOTABLE EVENTS

ECOG Conference 2019

Dr. Jennifer Morrissette, Scientific Director for the Center for Personalized Diagnostics and Cytogenetics, attended the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) Conference in Ft. Lauderdale this past October as a member of the Cytogenetics subdivision and while there, she gave a talk.

The ECOG-ACRIN (Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group - American College of Radiology Imaging Network) conference is a large multidisciplinary cancer research group that designs and conducts biomarker driven cancer research trials in adults with cancer or with cancer predisposition. As part of the Leukemia Committee within the Cytogenetics subdivision, Dr. Morrissette helps review the cytogenetic studies for clinical trials to assist with prognosis and unified categorization across hematological diseases.

The Fall 2019 ECOG-ACRIN meeting took place in Ft Lauderdale. The cytogenetics subcommittee reviewed activities of the prior 6 months and two presentations were given. Dr Elsa Bernard talked about *"TP53 Allelic State Shapes Genome Stability and Clinical Outcomes in Myelodysplastic Syndromes"* and Jennifer Morrissette discussed *"Screening de novo and relapse/refractory AML patient cells ex vivo for drug sensitivity and correlating with responses."*

Dr. Bernard discussed a cohort of over 3000 MDS patients sequenced with a 155 gene panel with concurrent cytogenetic studies and analyzed the allelic state of TP53 at diagnosis as well as implications for genomic stability, clinical relevance and mutation based outcomes. Dr. Morrissette discussed the process of analyzing drug sensitivity of AML-patient derived cells using cell viability screening analysis for responsiveness to a library of actionable drugs.

Goodbye Carmela



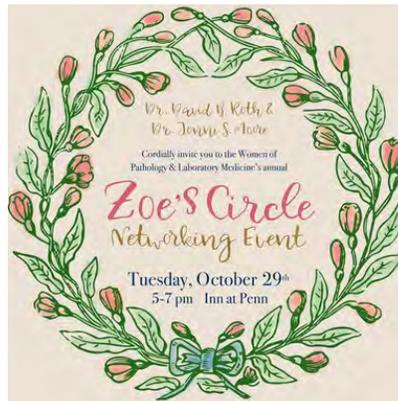
In December, CPD said goodbye to one of its post-doctoral fellows, Carmela Paolillo. She was celebrated with a going away breakfast and gifted with a used flow cell signed by everyone in the lab.

Carmela started in May of 2017. In the 2.5 years she was with the division, she validated Fusion 2.0 and the Penn Precision Panel for the CPD. In addition, she was a critical team member in the launch of the extractions on both the Biomek and the Lymphoma Panel. Finally, she worked diligently on the development work needed to optimize hybrid capture.

Carmela came from Jefferson where she had been in a study abroad program during her PhD, and continued on in their NGS lab for a year as a postdoc. She has moved on to become an assistant professor at the University of Foggia, in Italy, in Clinical and Experimental Medicine. She will remain an integral part of our Penn family and continue to work on projects with various faculty and staff within our division. We wish her the best!

Zoe's Circle

Zoe's circle is an annual women's networking event for faculty, residents, fellows and academic staff. The event is sponsored by the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and features a panel discussion and Q&A with professors of all ranks. This year's topic was "What I Know Now, But Wish I Had Known Then" and discussion ranged from academics to work life balance. Drs. Jacquelyn Roth and Vivianna Van Deerlin from the PCD attended the event.



"I learned so much from the faculty panel that evening. It was inspiring to see that everyone speaking took a different path in their successful careers and there is no 'one path fits all' - your career can be what you make of it here at Penn!" - Jacquelyn Roth

"I enjoyed catching up with my female colleagues who I don't see very often. I also enjoyed hearing the stories from the panel speakers and how they overcame challenges in their personal and academic lives. It is an opportunity to network with colleagues and trainees you already know in the department and to make new connections." - Vivianna Van Deerlin

Congratulations Dr. Van Deerlin



Vivianna Van Deerlin, the director of Molecular Pathology within the PCD, was recognized for 25 years of service to Penn Medicine. We are so lucky to have someone so loyal to our institution with such expertise in the field working within our division. Her influence on staff and faculty around her is significant. Thank you for sticking with us, Dr. Van Deerlin, we don't know where we'd be without you! On the left Dr. Van Deerlin is pictured with the lovely large Penn Medicine duffel bag she received as a token of her service.

S O C I A L E V E N T S

Halloween in the PCD

While some people love Halloween for the fake blood, our staff deal with the real stuff year round! Nevertheless, PCD had its fun with Halloween this year for sure! From costumes to candy, members from CPD and MolPath were enjoying the day!



Jen Smith, Administrative Director for MolPath, was the lucky winner of a large jar of candy in the HUP Halloween Candy Raffle! No doubt she shared with everyone!



Who knew Wonder Woman, Ninja Bruce Lee and Flo knew so much about genomics! Technologists, Amanda Liebert, Jason Limbo and Heather Mitchell from the CPD traded in their labcoats for a day of Halloween spirit!

Hula Hoop Contest



Article by: Gary Tang

She takes the hoop and places it over her. Jess takes a deep breath and spins the hoop around. She battles with keeping the hoop up and maintaining safe distance from the sink and the boxes of GRM folders. Will she be the first champion of the Hula Hoop Competition in 2020?

When new residents roll into MolPa, a Hula Hoop Competition is held to help the technologists and residents get acquainted with each other. The tradition began when Jessica Sondermann brought a hula hoop in for Stupid Human Tricks day for lab week two years ago. To keep the spirit of the hula hoop alive, Jess created a competition to bridge the residents and the technologist together. The competition is simple: Who can keep the hula hoop going the longest? This year a new rule was established to include pregnant competitors. Competitors can hula hoop with their arm with a full cup of water. If a drop of water spills, the timer stops. Winner of the competition gets a Wawa gift card and bragging rights.

The energy of the first hula hoop competition in 2020 is a hot one. Competitors have been practicing to beat the time of former winner who won the competition with 1 minute and 58 seconds. Some of the competitors have purchased hula hoops to practice at home. Michael Myers made a guest appearance and hula hooped with his hammer!

As the hoop spins and spins, Jess is focused on the prize. The hoop drops and the timer stops. Did she do it? Did her hard work help her win? The time read 18 seconds! Jess has won the first hula hoop competition of 2020. She did not surpass the lab record, but she hula hooped the longest. Jess will continue to practice and attempt to break the record at the next hula hoop competition.

PCD Friendsgiving



On Friday, November 22nd, members from all three departments of the PCD, came together and celebrated their very first Friendsgiving! Members brought in food, played games and celebrated a time of year where we can't help but be thankful for having such wonderful colleagues! The amount of food and variety of flavors was IMPRESSIVE to say the least. Laughter filled the 5020 conference room as precarious Jenga towers fell and stories were shared. It was a perfect way to head into the Thanksgiving holiday.

Fantasy Football



Football season is over and that means the CPD fantasy league has also reached its end. Chris Orr, variant analyst for the CPD, took home first place this year after a great season, with Jacquelyn Roth, PCD Faculty, coming in just behind him. 3rd place was secured by last year's champion, Amanda Leibert. So, what does 1st place get you? Well nothing really, besides bragging rights, which Orr is sure to take advantage of. When asked about his win, he had this to say,

"Victory is sweet since my team was predicted to finish 12th (last) after the draft. I would like to thank all my players who pulled together and stepped up when needed, not to mention all our fans! What are we going to do now? We're going to Disneyland!!!"

The draft for next year's league will be here before you know it. Will you be the one to knock the crown off Team Orr's head? Perhaps more than bragging rights will be at stake. You'll have to play to see!

SOCIAL EVENTS

Holly Days Program

The holiday season, while being a joyous time of year, can be difficult for those in need. Thankfully, there are always ways to give back. This year, the PCD banded together to sponsor a family living in a shelter for victims of domestic abuse, and a homeless veteran. Through monetary donations and items purchased off of an Amazon wish list, the family (A mother, with children ages 7 months, and 3 years), and the veteran were gifted everything they wished for! Gifts ranged from clothes and necessities to things like dress up clothes and educational toys for the kids! Caren Gentile, Jacquelyn Roth, and Samantha DiPompeo spearheaded the giving campaign and helped wrap and deliver gifts to the basement of HUP on Friday, December 6th. Staff collecting the gifts were so impressed with the amount we had to give, and it wouldn't have happened without the participation of everyone who donated. Events like these show what caring and generous people make up the Division of Precision and Computational Diagnostics!



Jacquelyn Roth wrapping a gift for the veteran.



Caren Gentile and Samantha DiPompeo with all the gifts donated for the family and veteran.

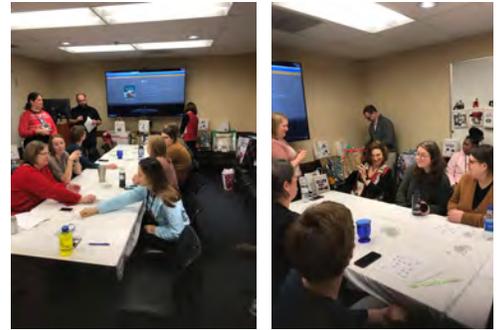
Holiday Festivities

The entire month of December was filled with joy and celebration for the upcoming holidays! From HUP all the way to 3020 Market, festivities ensued and merriment was had all around. Here are some pictures from various celebrations throughout our division!



CPD and Cytogenetics employees enjoyed a holiday lunch hosted by our neighbors at 3020 over in Histology. The catered bbq was DELICIOUS.

Members of Molpath celebrated the holiday at their annual party with games and gift giveaways! Everyone left smiling with gifts in hand!



The Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine threw their annual holiday party in the lobby of Smilow. PCD members showed up together and enjoyed the function.

Upcoming PCD Social Events:

Friday, February 21st:

PCD Meet and Greet Happy Hour

Join us at Market Tavern on 30th and Market from 5-7.

It's time we actually get to know our coworkers!

March:

Escape Room Event

Keep an eye out for more details!!!

April:

PCD Divisional Party

Keep an eye out for more details!!!

Wanted: Newsletter Volunteers

We are in search of some volunteers to help out with the Divisional Newsletter. If you have any interest in writing or design and want an outlet to express your talents please email Samantha DiPompeo: Samantha.Dipompeo@penmedicine.upenn.edu or Scott Weidamoyer: Scott.Weidamoyer@penmedicine.upenn.edu

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