Director’s Corner

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

Welcome to the sixth issue of our Divisional Newsletter. The last month of the year has been filled with numerous activities including intramural and extramural events. We continue to grow and are delighted to welcome Dr. Jackie Roth to the faculty of the Department of Pathology. Dr. Roth will perform activities bridging Cytogenetics, the Center for Personalized Diagnostics and Molecular Pathology. We are thrilled at her appointment and look forward to her contributions. Jackie, in coordination with Laura Pritchard, has been a critical contributor to our newsletter and continues to play a critical role in harmonizing activities by serving as the quality lead across the three sections of our division.

Among other extramural activities, members of the PCD enjoyed a visit to the Phillies baseball game with Deb Mincarelli (Lab Medicine), Ketan Patel (Anatomic Pathology) and Josh Edwards (Hematopathology). We are looking forward to more interactive intra- and trans-divisional activities.

Wishing you all a pleasant summer, full of fun activities!

Kojo S. J. Elenitoba-Johnson, M.D.

Morrissette at Duke

Jennifer Morrissette attended the Precision Medicine World Conference, held at Duke University May 24-25. Among many notable speakers, Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health (pictured), spoke about the Precision Medicine initiative, All of Us, to recruit 1 million diverse participants to contribute health, environment and lifestyle information, and participate in health screenings prospectively. Other highlights included talks by Elaine Mardis, Genomics Institute, Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Columbus, OH, and Stacey Gabriel who discussed advances in computational tools and their utility in clinical pipelines. There was a focus on personalized medicine running the gamut from the manipulation of the human microbiome corresponding to diet and disease (Laurence David, Duke University) to artificial intelligence to enable precision medicine.
Charity Events

For three days in June, Emma Staatz volunteered at Camp Erin in Schwenksville, PA. Camp Erin is the largest national bereavement program for youth grieving the death of a significant person in their lives. Emma described her experience as “life-changing” and that she is “so blessed that [she] got to be a part of it for two years in a row!” Emma also commented that “it was wonderful to watch these kids find support in one another, to recognize that they are not alone.”

Emma served as co-leader of the performing arts committee (pictured), and they put on a 17-act hour-long showcase in a single day. Other activities included playing games, having bonfires, and having a blast! Emma is already brainstorming for next year!

On Mother’s Day, Jackie Roth joined the Penn Medicine Team in raising money and participating in the Susan G Komen Race for the Cure. In addition to participating the past 6 years, Jackie served as the Co-Chair of the Race for the Cure in 2014 and 2015. Jackie is pictured with Penn team captain, Race Co-Chair, and friend, Kathy Trow. Please consider joining the Penn Medicine Team next year!

Social Media @ Penn

The Molecular Pathology Lab was selected as one of the winners of the Penn Medicine #GroundsForTheFuture social media contest! The contest was part of the ceremonial groundbreaking for the new Pavilion building. Congratulations MolPath!
Alicia Carlin, of the Molecular Pathology Laboratory, participated in the first ever St. Francis of Assisi School’s Career Day in Norristown, PA. This soon-to-be annual event was hosted by the fifth-grade class. Participants included students in grades 4-8. Alicia discussed a variety of careers in the field of science. The presentation ended with an exciting experiment where the students extracted DNA from strawberries. Strawberries are octoploids so the students obtained a TON of DNA. They were super excited. At the start of the presentation, only a handful of students were interested in science; at the end, more than half were considering a career in the sciences! Maybe we will see a student from SFA in our lab in a few years.

Amanda Oran, Chris Orr, Jackie Roth, and Robyn Sussman returned to their alma mater of Thomas Jefferson University to participate in a panel discussion and networking event entitled “Putting your PhD to work.” The event, hosted by the Graduate Student Association as part of a Career Night series, was attended by numerous current PhD students. PCD members discussed different careers in the clinical laboratory and even showed the group the PCD website and newsletter! Afterwards the students were thankful to learn more about careers in the field of Personalized Diagnostics!

Summer Fun in the PCD

Be sure to join us at the next event!
CONGRATULATIONS

The CPD’s own Ashkan Bigdeli graduated on May 25th from Harvard University. Ashkan joined the CPD after completing his coursework in March of 2016 and a year later returned to Cambridge for the ceremonial walk. Ashkan graduated with a Masters in Bioinformatics and his class included Mark Zuckerberg, who he handily beat to the degree finish line by a decade. Congratulations Ash!

After defending her thesis in February, Amanda Oran walked in the graduation ceremony and officially earned her PhD from Thomas Jefferson University. She was also the recipient of an award for her doctoral thesis in the program of Genetics, Genomics and Cancer Biology. Congratulations Amanda!

Congratulations to MolPath technologist Dao Luong on her recent marriage! She celebrated with a traditional Chinese tea ceremony this past May!

Kelly King is the most recent addition to the Molecular Pathology lab. She graduated from Temple University in 2014 with a BS in Biology. This was followed by a year of clinical rotations in Medical Laboratory Science at Pennsylvania Hospital. From there, she earned her ASCP certification and began working in the Special Coagulation Lab at HUP. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, baking and exploring the city of Philadelphia.

The PCD welcomed distinguished speaker Federico Monzon, MD, for a visit in June. He gave a seminar entitled “Omics in the Clinic: Real Life Hurdles for Implementation of Multigene Cancer Tests” and in addition, he toured the lab and chatted with staff and fellows!

Save the date for Yoga on the Schuylkill Banks! 
7/18/17 (rain date 7/25/17)
6-7pm, meet at CPD at 5:40 or meet us there!
Check your email for more details!

Contributors

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Do you have comments, suggestions, or content for the newsletter? Please contact Jackie Roth or Laura Pritchard; jacquelyn.roth@uphs.upenn.edu or laura.pritchard@uphs.upenn.edu