

Community Update

JANUARY 2010

Staying in Touch

GREETINGS AND WELCOME TO THE FIRST 2010 EDITION OF THE GNL COMMUNITY UPDATE.

Thanks to each of you who attended the Community Advisory Board (CAB) meeting on Dec. 2. This new year promises to be a big one for the infectious diseases research program at UTMB. As the Galveston National Laboratory (GNL) moves closer to “fully operational” status, we will continue to provide these regular updates. Should you have any questions or an idea on something you would like to see highlighted in a future e-newsletter, please do not hesitate to let us know.

EMERGING STARS IN INFECTIOUS DISEASE RESEARCH



In each e-newsletter we strive to highlight some of the important infectious disease research ongoing at UTMB. In this edition, we'd like to introduce you to another one of our emerging stars. Richard Pyles, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the departments of Pediatrics, Microbiology & Immunology, and Pathology. He is also a part of the Sealy Center for Vaccine Development and the Center for Hepatitis Research.

Dr. Pyles' research interests focus on the use of advanced diagnostic techniques for detection of infectious agents in human clinical samples. He directs the laboratory activities of the Institute for Human Infections and Immunity's (IHII) Molecular Epidemiology Program. His team was among the first to utilize a novel nucleic acid detection technology to identify persons infected with H1N1 “swine” influenza viruses in Texas and Mexico. His laboratory also studies the key host factors that influence the outcome of infections with herpes viruses, and the human molecules that act as sentinels to “ring an alarm” to the immune system upon invasion by an infectious agent.

GNL COMMISSIONING/RESEARCH UPDATE

The GNL's associate director for research, Dr. Joan Nichols, reports that the commissioning and certification of the GNL laboratories continues on schedule. As noted in the last CAB e-newsletter, the lab's BSL2 space is up and running. The GNL's BSL4 space is in the final stages of approval from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As you read this e-newsletter, inspectors from the CDC will again be on campus to complete their review of the remaining new GNL laboratories, namely the BSL3 spaces, as well as perform their annual three-year re-inspections for the remaining select agent (BSL3 and BSL4) laboratories on campus. Winter into spring will be a busy time for the GNL but this rigorous inspection and approval schedule should yield a fully operational GNL in 2010.

LEMON HEADED "HOME" TO UNC



After 13 years at UTMB Dr. Stanley M. Lemon, director of the Institute for Human Infections and Immunity (IHII) recently announced his intention to return to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where, later this spring, he will be a professor in the Department of Medicine and a

member of the Inflammatory Disease Institute, Center for Translational Immunology, and the Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center. Lemon played a significant and pivotal role in UTMB's successful bid in 2003 for federal funding to construct and operate the GNL, a national biocontainment laboratory dedicated to the safe study of infectious threats to human health. After 20 years at UNC Chapel Hill, Lemon came to UTMB in 1997 as chairman of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology. He served as interim dean of medicine from 1999 to 2000 and as dean from 2000 to 2004. Lemon became director of UTMB's IHII, as well as director of the GNL, in 2004. One of the world's foremost experts on hepatitis C, Lemon is returning "home" to a career in research with a goal of finding better approaches to treat the disease.

CAMPUS IKE REPAIRS WELL UNDER WAY

At the last quarterly CAB meeting many of you inquired as to the status of campus construction efforts. We are pleased to let you know that UTMB's Facilities and Business Operations Department (also known as Facilities Operations and Management, or FOAM) is implementing an ambitious plan to restore, by 2012, the one million square feet of UTMB facilities essentially lost in Hurricane Ike. Plans call for renovation of: 400,000 square feet in 2010; an additional 400,000 square feet in 2011; and the residual 200,000 square feet in 2012. To that end, some 1,000 construction workers will be on-site at UTMB over the next two to three years. Mike Shriner, Vice President, Business Operations & Facilities, said, "The construction teams will ramp up during 2010 and top out at about 1,000. We are eagerly awaiting their arrival and planning for the influx of many workers

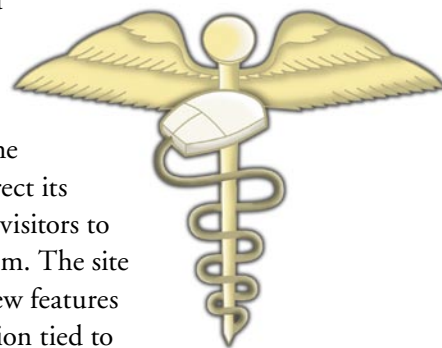


on our campus." Community members can stay abreast of rebuilding efforts and new construction plans by visiting the university's new interactive campus map at www.utmb.edu/construction/.

The map features current information on hospital and clinical buildings, with details about other construction projects on campus being added regularly. As features are added, visitors to the map site will be able to select any UTMB building and learn about specific construction plans. On a related note, the University of Texas System Board of Regents has approved an expenditure of up to \$1.5 million to complete the planning phase for construction of a proposed Surgical Care Tower to replace Jennie Sealy Hospital. UTMB leadership will present the design and estimated costs for the proposed facility at the UT System Regents meeting in June 2011. At that time, UT System leadership will decide when and how to proceed with the project. The proposed facility, slated for construction on the site of the current Jennie Sealy Hospital, will feature state-of-the-art surgical suites and add 214 patient beds to UTMB.

NEW WEB SITE IN PLACE TO SERVE UTMB PATIENTS

The new year heralded the launch of a long-anticipated update to UTMB's clinical web presence. On Jan. 4, the university began to direct its Internet-based patient visitors to www.UTMBhealth.com. The site features a new look, new features and simplified navigation tied to visitor usage trends. The redesign relied heavily on user input and traffic analysis to identify which parts of the site are in heaviest demand. Currently at UTMB, the most frequently visited destinations are pages that offer updated physician information and details on clinical locations. The web site also enables secure online appointment and prescription refill requests, access to billing information, and features a calendar, a health information library, and much more. A task force appointed by university leadership continues to enhance and develop this community resource, and welcomes user input and feedback. Please explore the site and share your impressions at www.utmbhealth.com.



UPCOMING CAB MEETING DATES

Please plan to join us on the following upcoming CAB meeting dates from 8 a.m.–10 a.m. in the Caduceus Room located on the sixth floor of the UTMB Administration Building:

APRIL 8, 2010 and AUGUST 4, 2010.

Email reminders will also be sent out prior to each meeting.