

# Community Update

VOL. 7, JANUARY 2011

## Staying in Touch

### WELCOME TO THE WINTER 2010/11 EDITION OF OUR GNL COMMUNITY UPDATE.

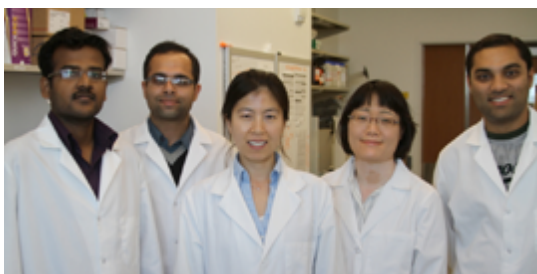
Members who attended the quarterly Community Advisory Board meeting on December 8 received updates on research work at UTMB, as well as institutional updates on campus plans and legislative items of interest.

Thanks to all who attended. Your interest in UTMB and our activities is sincerely appreciated. As always, if you have any questions or ideas on something you would like to see highlighted in future editions of this e-newsletter, please let us know.



### EMERGING STARS IN INFECTIOUS DISEASE RESEARCH

In each e-newsletter we highlight some of the important research ongoing at UTMB. In this edition we'd like to introduce



*From left to right; Saravanabalaji Shanmugam (post doc), Manu Anantpadma (post doc), Dr. Yi, Eunmi Kim (post doc) and Pratim Chowdhury (research associate).*

you to one of our researchers in the field of infectious diseases. Minkyung Yi, PhD, is an associate professor in the department of Microbiology & Immunology, a scientist with the Sealy Center for Vaccine Development and a member of the Institute for Human Infections and Immunity.

Inside her BSL2 lab, located in the Galveston National Laboratory, Dr. Yi and her team of three postdocs and one technician are involved in research related to the replication of the hepatitis C virus (HCV). HCV is an important human pathogen that chronically affects an estimated 170 million people – a number that Dr. Yi is hoping to diminish through her research. She has been incredibly successful in obtaining grant funding for her work, reflective of HCV's status as one of the important emerging infectious diseases affecting human health here at home and abroad.

HCV causes a range of diseases, including chronic hepatitis, cirrhosis, hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) and metabolic syndromes such as type 2 diabetes. Currently, Dr. Yi is focusing

her research on understanding the fundamental role of nonstructural proteins during HCV replication. Her group is also studying HCV-induced signaling pathways that lead to the development of metabolic diseases and cancer, with the goal of developing better means of treatment and prevention for HCV-induced diseases.

### GNL COMMISSIONING/RESEARCH UPDATE

The Galveston National Laboratory's associate director for research and operations, Dr. Joan Nichols, reports that all labs within the GNL are now in full operation. Most recently the BSL3-enhanced (BSL3-E) laboratories were cleared for full operation and researchers have begun occupying that space. Unlike a normal BSL3 lab, BSL3-E laboratories require use of respiratory protection and a clothing change (no street clothes inside); also, each person must shower prior to leaving the facility.

The online status of the BSL3-E marks the end of a more than two-year effort to bring the entire GNL facility into full operation. This is a tremendous accomplishment! As you know, each stage of this "commissioning and approval" process involved hundreds of hours of careful step-wise preparation and safety planning. Getting a complex medical research facility such as the GNL to fully operational status takes a dedicated team and a tremendous amount of patient and careful planning. Researchers now at work in the biocontainment level 2, 3 and 4 areas are putting the lab to good use fulfilling the GNL's purpose to aid the U.S. in the discovery, development and evaluation of the tests, treatments and vaccines needed to advance global health initiatives now and in the future.



## GNL HOSTS TOPICS IN BIOSECURITY SESSION



Biosecurity, especially as it regards select agent research, is currently one of the hottest topics under debate within the federal government. This debate will ultimately result in updated federal regulations and

guidelines that will impact U.S. research and the lives of future scientists in the infectious disease research field.

To better understand the current national dialogue on biosecurity, the GNL recently hosted a *Topics in Biosecurity Symposia Series*. As the only active BSL4 research program underway on a U.S. academic campus, the GNL seeks to ensure that our students, staff, faculty and community have opportunities to participate in this ongoing discussion. So, on November 9, 2010, the GNL, along with UTMB's Western Regional Center of Excellence for Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Diseases Research (WRCE) and the National Biocontainment Training Center (NBTC), hosted the first symposium in what is intended to become a series dedicated to topics in biosecurity.

An overflow crowd of students, faculty and community members heard from policy experts on the probable outlook for future industry regulatory guidelines. The Honorable Susan A. Ehrlich, J.D., L.L.M., a retired judge on the Arizona Court of Appeals and a member of the National Science Advisory Board on Biosecurity (NSABB), joined Victoria Sutton, M.P.A., Ph.D., J.D., Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Biodefense, Law and Public Policy at Texas Tech University School of Law, as guest speaker for this inaugural session, which tackled some of the pressing biosecurity policy matters facing today's researchers. [Click here](#) to read a follow-up editorial in the Galveston County Daily News. Look for the next session in the series in February 2011!

**SPEAKER REQUESTS:** Do you know of a local civic or educational group that might enjoy hearing from one of UTMB's infectious disease researchers? From tips on fighting the flu to the complexities of biocontainment research, our team is engaged in ground-breaking research across a variety of areas



The GNL's Dr. Joan Nichols (left) spoke with the Rotary Club of Galveston Island on November 30, 2010. She is pictured with the club's leadership.

and we are happy to share news of that work with you. We can assemble guest speakers and presentations for any age group. Send us a note at [www.utmb.edu/gnl/contact](http://www.utmb.edu/gnl/contact) for further information.

## UTMB COMMUNITY HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Thanks to all in our community who joined in UTMB's holiday celebrations. Two of the many events are highlighted below. We wish you a joyous and health 2011!

### **Cookies with Santa hosted by UTMB Faculty Women's Club.**

Held in early December at the home of Jim and Maryellen LeDuc, the annual holiday tradition marks the start of the season with a visit from Santa and his elves.

### **Lights of Love at the Ronald McDonald House.**

The 5th annual Lights of Love event was held on December 4 at the Ronald McDonald House and attracted more than 400 people! Several members of the UTMB team helped to organize the event, including the LeDuc's, Dr. Tom and Shirley Ksiazek, Bill and Kathy Elger, and Mark and Mary Jo Kirschbaum. Santa Claus arrived in a carriage with Mrs. Claus and joined Ronald McDonald and friends in support of the House. The evening culminated with the turning on of all the Christmas lights decorating the House.



(top to bottom) Santa and Mrs. Claus hold the young son of GNL postdoc Chad Mire, Maryellen LeDuc and Shirley Ksiazek, Santa and Mrs. Claus with the GNL's Dr. Elizabeth Fritz and her son.



## Upcoming Community Advisory Board 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:

- Wednesday, April 20, 2011
- Wednesday, August 24, 2011

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