The Texas Society of Pathologists Holds Annual Meeting in Houston

The Texas Society of Pathologists (TSP) held their annual meeting at the Omni Hotel in Houston from January 17 to 19th. Houston Methodist’s Medical Director of Molecular Diagnostics, Dr. Randall Olsen, kicked off the weekend-long conference with a seminar titled: “Impact of New Diagnostic Technologies in the Clinical Microbiology Laboratory”.

Dr. Olsen’s talk was followed by a dinner honoring our own Dr. Philip Cagle, Medical Director of Pulmonary Pathology for the Department, who was presented with the John J. Andujar, MD, Certificate of Merit by the Society. This award recognizes individuals who have contributed significantly to pathology and medicine. “It is an honor to be acknowledged by my fellow pathologists with this award”, said Dr. Cagle. In addition to his clinical duties and dedication to teaching residents and fellows, Dr. Cagle serves as editor-in-chief of Archives of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. For more information on Dr. Cagle, please visit: http://www.houston-methodist.org/Cagle

Other highlights from the TSP conference included the presentation of the resident poster competition’s first-place award to Dr. Rachel Donohue, a PGY3 resident and this edition of the newsletter’s featured trainee (see “Trainee Spotlight”, p. 5).

The Texas Society of Pathologists membership has almost 800 pathologists, and was founded in 1921, making it the oldest continuous state pathology society in existence. For more information on the TSP, please visit: http://www.texpath.org/

Dr. Philip Cagle accepting the John J. Andujar, MD, Certificate of Merit, presented by TSP president Dr. Joe Saad.

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Houston Society of Clinical Pathologists Honors Dr. Luan Truong

The Houston Society of Clinical Pathologists will award Dr. Luan Truong, MD, the Harlan J. Spjut award at its 55th Annual Spring Symposium held Saturday, April 26th, at the Hornberger Conference Center. This award, which was started in 1989, is given annually to a distinguished pathologist with sustained and distinguished scholarly achievements in the discipline. “This is a wonderful recognition of Dr. Truong’s numerous scholarly, clinical, and educational achievements in nephropathology,” says Dr. Mary Schwartz, medical director of anatomic pathology and the 2009 recipient of the award.

Dr. Truong, who is medical director of renal pathology for the Department, divides his time between his clinical duties, working with trainees, and an active translational research program with specific emphasis on nephropathology. He has published over 240 peer-reviewed papers. “We are so fortunate to have someone with Dr. Truong’s expertise in our department. His contributions to patient care and leadership of the renal pathology team are unparalleled,” says Dr. James M. Musser, chair of the Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine.

Dr. Truong received his medical degree from Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine, and did his residency training at Baylor College of Medicine followed by a fellowship in renal pathology at Columbia University. This year marks his 30th anniversary at Houston Methodist as an attending pathologist and director of renal pathology. Congratulations, Dr. Truong!

CEO of the College of American Pathologists Visits Department

Dr. Philip Cagle hosted the College of American Pathologists’ (CAP) Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Charles Roussel, and the Director of Executive Operations, Branden Marty, as they toured Houston Methodist Hospital’s Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine on January 29th.

“Our Department at Houston Methodist has a very high profile and integral role in the CAP, including the Residents Forum and Archives of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine (a CAP publication). The CEO was very interested in learning more about our department,” said Dr. Cagle, medical director of pulmonary pathology and editor-in-chief of Archives. This was their first visit to HMH, and both visitors were very impressed by the high quality of service, advanced technology, devotion to our patients, and forward vision that are epitomized by the department and our faculty, trainees, and staff.

They visited many divisions within the department, and the tour culminated in the Research Institute building, where Dr. Cagle was joined by Drs. Randall Olsen and Bryce Portier (pictured). Directly following their visit, Dr. Roussel wrote a glowing review of the department in his online blog called Plane Talk, and commented that “The [Research] Institute is just one example of how cooperation among disciplines and across platforms (e.g. imaging, laboratory medicine, bioengineering) is helping Houston Methodist earn a national reputation as a place to be for young pathologists who want to practice cutting edge science as part of an integrated patient care team.”
Dr. James M. Musser, Chair, Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine

Dr. James M. Musser, chair of the Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine for the Houston Methodist Hospital System, spoke to a group of young Houston-area CEOs at a meeting of the Houston Chapter of the Young Presidents’ Organization (YPO). The day-long “mini-University” was held at the Houston Methodist Research Institute on January 21st, and featured several Houston Methodist physicians and investigators. The theme of the event was “Infinite Youth”. Dr. Musser’s talks titled “Will the Germs Ultimately Win?” and “Your Environment, Your Body” highlighted how advances in science are influencing our well-being and helping us live longer and healthier lives. The participants also were treated to a keynote address by Houston Methodist’s Dr. Eugene Alford.

The YPO currently has over 20,000 members in 120 different countries. The Houston chapter is a group of approximately 120 CEOs and other young Houston-area leaders from the oil and gas industry and other businesses. They meet several times a year to promote networking and share experiences of what it means to be a young leader in Houston.

Dr. Jordan A. Roberts, M.D., a second-year resident in the department, was honored by The College of American Pathologists (CAP) Foundation with the Leadership Development Award at their annual meeting in Orlando, Florida, last October. This award was specifically designed to expose young pathologists-in-training to the current challenges that face the specialty and how they are addressed at the national level. This grant will allow Dr. Roberts to attend the CAP 2014 Policy Meeting in Washington D.C. this spring.

“It is important for pathologists to be involved in shaping health care policy,” said Dr. Jordan. “Often, because we are a smaller, less well-represented specialty, policy makers, patients, and even other clinicians, need to be educated about the critical role of the pathologist on the healthcare team. I am honored to have been selected to participate in this meeting.” To learn more about our residents and residency program, please visit: http://www.houstonmethodist.org/pathology-training
American Society for Investigative Pathology to Convene in San Diego

The American Society for Investigative Pathology (ASIP) will hold its 2014 annual meeting on April 26th – 30th at the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, California. As current president of the ASIP, Dr. James M. Musser, chair of the Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine, will preside over an exciting and diverse agenda. The ASIP meeting will focus on the pathobiology of disease, and symposia topics include “Personalized Medicine Therapies for Lung Cancer” and “Genomic-Scale Analysis of Single Cells.” Several department faculty are attending and will present their research findings. For a full list of speakers and topics, or to register, please visit: http://www.asip.org/meetings/2014/index.cfm

New Tests Available from Houston Methodist Diagnostic Laboratory

Anti-Xa Rivaroxaban (Xarelto®) Levels

Rivaroxaban (Xarelto®) is a new oral anticoagulant designed to replace warfarin for patients with venous thrombosis or thrombosis associated with atrial fibrillation. Rivaroxaban does not require routine monitoring, but measurement of levels may be useful for patients with bleeding or thrombosis while taking the medication or for clearance prior to surgery. Available stat 24/7. Sample: frozen citrate plasma. For more details or ordering information, please contact Sara Hanzel (sbhanzel@houstonmethodist.org) or Dr. Wayne Chandler (wlchandler@houstonmethodist.org).

MLPA Assay to Detect Oligodendroglioma Biomarkers

Oligodendrogliomas are a type of primary brain tumor that can be difficult to diagnose. Distinguishing oligodendrogliomas from other primary brain tumors based solely on histology, or how the tumors appear under a microscopic, is challenging. However, this distinction is clinically important as it affects treatment and prognosis: oligodendrogliomas frequently respond favorably to chemotherapy and are associated with longer survival. Detecting loss of part of chromosome 1 and 19 (1p & 19q) provides a molecular signature that is strongly associated with oligodendrogliomas. In addition to chromosome loss, oligodendrogliomas also commonly have mutations in the IDH1 or IDH2 gene, and patients with these mutations typically have better outcomes than patients without.

A new molecular assay offered by the Houston Methodist Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine’s Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory uses an efficient and streamlined approach to detect both chromosome loss (1p and 19q) and gene mutation (IDH1 and IDH2) in a single assay. The technology is referred to as “Multiplex Ligation-dependent Probe Amplification” or MLPA. The technique simultaneously uses DNA probes that recognize changes in chromosome 1, chromosome 19, IDH1, and IDH2, all in a single assay. It is currently available and run weekly to provide rapid turnaround times. For more information on these assays or any molecular diagnostic laboratory test, please contact Dr. Bryce Portier (bpportier@houstonmethodist.org) or Dr. Randall Olsen (rjolsen@houstonmethodist.org).

MLPA is highly sensitive and accurate, and can detect abnormal chromosomal copy numbers or single nucleotide differences in genes. Image from FisherBiotec.com
Houston Methodist Pathologists “In Press”

Dr. Dina Mody, medical director of cytopathology, is lead author on a new 800-plus-page scholarly book called *Diagnostic Pathology: Cytopathology*. This book is extremely representative of Houston Methodist, as all cytopathologists within the department (and other members not in cytopathology) contributed chapters. With additional contributions from faculty at M.D. Anderson and Baylor, this work showcases the concentrated expertise present in the Texas Medical Center. The book debuted at the recent United States & Canada Association of Pathologists (USCAP) 2014 Annual Meeting held in San Diego on March 1st. It is published as part of the Amirsys Series and can be found here: [http://www.amirsyspublishing.com/diagnostic-pathology/Mody](http://www.amirsyspublishing.com/diagnostic-pathology/Mody)

Dr. Roberto Barrios, associate medical director of pulmonary pathology, renal pathology, and immunohistochemistry services, and Dr. Abida Haque, staff pathologist at Houston Methodist and Houston Methodist San Jacinto, published a book in December called *Parasitic Diseases of the Lungs*. This book is one of the few works on the subject and is specifically directed toward the practicing pathologist. It covers all relevant parasitic diseases, and is available online through Springer Publishing at: [http://www.springer.com/medicine/pathology/book/Barrios_Haque](http://www.springer.com/medicine/pathology/book/Barrios_Haque)

Trainee Spotlight: Rachel Donohue, M.D.

Rachel Donohue, M.D., a PGY3 resident, was awarded first place in the resident poster competition at this year’s Texas Society of Pathologists annual meeting. Her award-winning work was titled “High-sensitivity flow cytometry testing for paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinuria in children with cytopenia: a single center study”. This project was completed in collaboration with Dr. Choladda Curry of Texas Children’s Hospital during Dr. Donohue’s pediatric hematopathology rotation, and will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal in the near future. In addition to the Texas Society of Pathologists, Dr. Donohue is a member of the American Medical Association, the Houston Society of Clinical Pathology, and the American Society for Clinical Pathology, among others.

Dr. Donohue received her medical degree from the University of New Mexico School of Medicine in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2011. She joined Houston Methodist’s AP/CP residency program in July of that same year.

Dr. Rachel Donohue
New Year, New Milestones for the Houston Methodist Diagnostic Laboratory

The rapidly-expanding Houston Methodist Diagnostic Laboratory (HMDL) has ushered in 2014 with many exciting additions that enhance their ability to provide outstanding reference laboratory services. Added to the HMDL were new clients, new tests, and a new, streamlined billing system and web portal. “We have expanded our client base from Louisiana to California” said Dr. Wayne Chandler, director of HMDL. “Clients are now able to easily order tests online through the expanded and user-friendly website.”

Recently-added tests to the online menu include: the Respiratory Pathogens Assay that rapidly detects most pathogens responsible for upper and lower respiratory tract infections; a genetic screening panel to detect oligodendrogliomas, a difficult to diagnose brain tumor; and a new assay to detect levels of rivaroxaban (Xarelto®), an oral anticoagulant designed to replace traditional warfarin for patients with certain conditions. In addition, new testing modalities are in constant development, and include integration of mass spectrometry, fluorescent in situ hybridization, whole genome sequencing, diagnostic immunology, and coagulation assays.

To learn more about the HMDL or to order tests, please visit: http://www.houstonmethodist.org/houston-methodist-diagnostic-laboratories

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Cancer Biomarkers Conference 2014

SPEAKERS

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<tr>
<td>Angela N. Bartley, M.D.</td>
<td>Department of Pathology, St. Joseph Mercy Hospital</td>
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<td>Patrick Fitzgibbons, M.D.</td>
<td>Chair, Cancer Biomarker Reporting Committee, College of American Pathologists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stanley R. Hamilton, M.D.</td>
<td>Division Head, Pathology/Lab Medicine, MD Anderson Cancer Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexander Lazar, M.D., Ph.D.</td>
<td>Director, Sarcoma &amp; Melanoma Molecular Diagnostics, Associate Professor of Pathology and Dermatology, MD Anderson Cancer Center</td>
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<td>Neal Lindeman, M.D.</td>
<td>Director, Molecular Diagnostics, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and Associate Professor, Pathology, Harvard Medical School</td>
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<td>Jan Nowak, M.D., Ph.D.</td>
<td>Chair, Molecular Diagnostics Lab, University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine</td>
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<td>Mark A. Rubin, M.D.</td>
<td>Director of the Institute for Precision Medicine, Weill Cornell Medical College</td>
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<td>Fattaneh Abbas-Zadeh Tavassoli, M.D.</td>
<td>Professor of Pathology, Yale School of Medicine</td>
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A flow cell for the Illumina MiSeq instrument is used for whole genome sequencing of microbes in our clinical laboratory.
The Houston Methodist Sugar Land branch of the Department of Pathology and Genomic Medicine co-sponsored the Pretty in Pink breast cancer fundraiser held in Sugar Land Town Square last October.

The event raised almost $115,000 to support patients receiving treatment at the Houston Methodist Sugar Land hospital. The money will be used to help with daily expenses, medications, wigs, and other financial obligations to help alleviate some of the financial stresses associated with fighting cancer.

“The event was very well attended and a great success. Our department’s sponsorship for this worthy cause was especially appreciated” said Dr. Seema Mullick, medical director at Houston Methodist Sugar Land. To see more pictures from Pretty in Pink, please visit the Houston Methodist Sugar Land Facebook page at: https://www.facebook.com/MethodistSugarLand

Digital Pathology Update

Houston Methodist's outing hospitals are now able to receive same-day immunohistochemistry results via digital pathology. The whole-slide imaging (WSI) scans make results more readily available and circumvent any delays potentially caused by physical delivery. This will enable pathologists to sign out cases more quickly and reduce turnaround times, ultimately leading to shorter hospital stays and the ability to expedite next steps. The glass slides continue to be sent by courier and are available for review the next day. “This is only one step toward realizing the full potential of WSI and its impact on pathology”, said Dr. Michael Thrall, medical director of digital pathology for the Department.

The Department implemented digital pathology in March of 2012. WSI involves scanning the glass slides and digitizing them into high-resolution images that can then be electronically transferred to facilitate diagnosis and consultations within and across institutions. Digital pathology will continue to revolutionize the practice, and enables easier archiving, telepathology, and training.

Congratulations!

Dr. Yimin Ge, staff pathologist and assistant clinical member of the Houston Methodist Research Institute, was recently promoted to Associate Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College of Cornell University. Dr. Ge is a surgical pathologist with subspecialty interest in cytopathology. He has an active research program that focuses on the correlation between different genotypes of human papilloma virus and their ability to cause cervical cancer. Congratulations, Dr. Ge!
Next Edition Preview: Two New Additions to the Methodist System

The Houston Methodist Hospital System recently added two new members: Houston Methodist St. Catherine in Katy (pictured left) and Houston Methodist St. John in Clear Lake (pictured right). The Department has begun supplying pathology services to both facilities. More details to come in the spring edition of The Laboratory Report.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS


