



Six AFMR Members Appointed to IOM Roundtable on Clinical Research



Veronica Catanese, MD, former president of the AFMR and director for development of the AFMR Foundation has been named to the Institute of Medicine Clinical Research Roundtable.

THE Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences is in the process of appointing a "roundtable" to monitor and promote solutions to acute and long-term problems confronting clinical research. Six members of the AFMR have been appointed to the Roundtable: Dr. Veronica Catanese, associate professor of medicine and associate dean at New York University, who also serves as editor of the *Journal of Investigative Medicine*; Dr. William Crowley, Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Director of Clinical Research at the Massachusetts General Hospital; Dr. John Eisenberg,

Administrator of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; Dr. John Feussner, Chief of the VA Research program; Dr. Stephen Katz, Director of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases; and Dr. Louis Sherwood, Senior Vice President for Medical and Scientific Affairs at Merck & Co, Inc.

Over the past five years, several expert panels have highlighted the need to enhance opportunities to train for and sustain careers in clinical research. AFMR and other organizations have expressed concern about the failure to implement the recommendations of these panels. AFMR has pursued solutions through its government relations program (by advocating the Clinical Research Enhancement Act) and its Foundation (by securing support for awards, meetings, and publications to enhance career opportunities for the clinical investigator).

Last fall, former AFMR President William Lowe met with senior IOM officials about plans for the Roundtable. "We are optimistic that the IOM Roundtable will serve to stimulate *action*, and not just more discussion on the clinical research crisis," said Dr. Lowe. "We are extremely pleased that six AFMR members, all of whom are known to be effective representatives of the clinical research community, will be participating in this important effort." ■



Senator Arlen Specter is championing a \$20.5 billion budget for NIH.

FY 2001 Budget Battle Begins

CONSIDERATION of the FY 2001 budget has begun in Washington. Following is a summary of action to date (the President's budget proposal and preliminary Congressional action) and AFMR's FY 2001 budget recommendations for the National Institutes of Health, the VA Research program, and the Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research.

National Institutes of Health

President Clinton's proposed budget included \$18.8 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a 5.6% increase over the current year. Within the proposed FY 2001 increase, the total number of grants will remain

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WESTERN REGIONAL MEETING

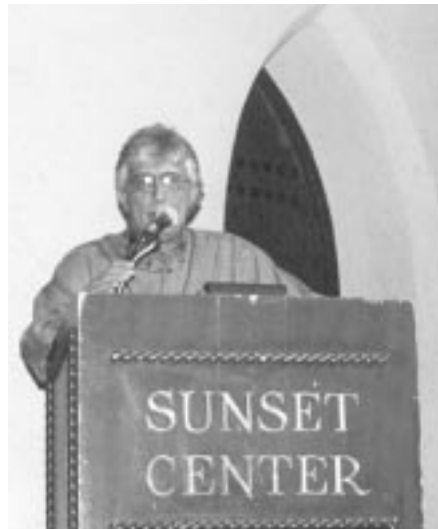
Another Successful Meeting in Carmel



Western Section Officers: Chair-elect Mark Burge (University of New Mexico); past-chair Kevin O'Brien (University of Washington); and current chair Jane Reusch (University of Colorado).

THE WESTERN SECTION of the AFMR (WAFMR), the Western Association of Physicians, the Western Society of Clinical Investigation, the Western Society for Pediatric Research and the Western Student Medical Research Forum met in Carmel, California for their annual meeting on February 9–12, 2000. The success of the meeting was apparent to all based on the large number of abstracts and the cutting-edge research that was presented during the plenary sessions.

The meeting included an outstanding joint session on vascular biology and diabetes. Excellent presentations were made by Steve Prescott of the Huntsman Cancer Institute in Salt Lake City, former AFMR president, Willa Hsueh, Chief of the Endocrine



Alan Chait (University of Washington) presented his research on Lipoprotein/teoglycan interactions in diabetic vascular disease.

Division at the University of California, Los Angeles, and Alan Chait from the University of Washington. The



Steve Prescott (University of Utah) presented his group's findings on the role of the enzyme PAFase in inflammation.



AFMR past president, Willa Hsueh (University of Southern California) presented her research on the PPAR gamma nuclear receptor at the Plenary.

Western meeting also offered an opportunity for over 100 students to present their research to peers and mentors during the six scientific sessions for students.



Western Section Chair Kevin O'Brien (right) congratulates Alberto Zambon (left), recipient of the Outstanding Investigator Award.

The WAFMR Council met to elect new officers for the 2000/2001 year and to discuss the public policy activities of the AFMR. Ms. Lynn Morrison, special advisor to the president, described the AFMR's public policy activities in Washington, DC related to the FY 2000 and FY 2001 budget for the National Institutes of Health, the Clinical Research Enhancement Act and the VA medical research program.

Dr. Mark Burge, (University of New Mexico) was elected Chair-elect of the WAFMR, and Dr. Jane Reusch (University of Colorado) became Chair of the WAFMR for the 2000/2001 year. In addition, Dr. James Roum (University of California, Irvine) was elected secretary-treasurer. Also elected at the meeting was Dr. Theodore Wun, (University of California, Davis), who will serve as the Western representative on the AFMR National Council.

The AFMR would like to thank Dr. Kevin O'Brien for his strong leadership as chair of the WAFMR and for all of his work to make the 2000 WAFMR meeting a success. ■

WAFMR 2001

Planning is underway for the 2001 WAFMR meeting to be held February 7-12, 2001.

*We look forward
to seeing you there!*

American Federation for Medical Research ***2000 WESTERN COUNCIL***

Jane E.B. Reusch, MD, *Chair*
 Mark R. Burge, MD *Chair-Elect*
 James Roum, MD, *Secretary-Treasurer*
 Theodore Wun, MD
 James Dale Anholm, MD
 Robert J. Bryg, MD
 Brian Conway, MD
 John P. Cooke, MD
 Paul Easton, MD
 Juan Frias, MD
 Gary K. Iwamoto, MD
 Robert S. Klein, MD
 Thomas McKenzie, MD
 Andrew Stolz, MD

JAMES ROUM

Following the February 2000 meeting, James Roum began his term as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Western Section. Dr. Roum is currently Assistant Professor of Medicine in Pulmonary and Critical Care at the University of California, Irvine and has been a member of AFMR since 1994. Dr. Roum joined AFMR while in medical school and attended the Western Section meeting as a medical school representative. Dr. Roum feels that AFMR is a great organization, which combines good medical research that crosses over all disciplines. He believes that AFMR has exercised impressive lobbying efforts to support funding for medical research. Roum is an active investigator at the University of California, Irvine. He was awarded the Young Investigator Award from the American Lung Association. He is also a co-investigator and principal investigator on several other studies. ■

SOUTHERN REGIONAL MEETING

AFMR Hosts Successful Meeting



The Southern Section meeting provides a unique opportunity for students to present their research to their peers and mentors. The SAFMR and SSCI were honored to provide student research travel awards to 23 students this year.



Duncan Hite, secretary-treasurer of the SAFMR provided an overview of recent AFMR activities at the Southern meeting.

IN FEBRUARY, the Southern AFMR (SAFMR) annual meeting was held in New Orleans in conjunction with the Ambulatory Pediatric Association, the American Physiological Society, the Southern Society for Clinical Investigation, the Southern Society for General Internal Medicine, the Southern Society for Pediatric Research, and the Southwest Section of the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine. The highlight of the meeting was the Joint Plenary Session held on Saturday, February 19, featuring outstanding research presentations by Jay Skylar of the University of Miami, Dana Hardin of the University of Texas-Houston Medical School, and Richard Koup of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. The session, entitled "Chronic Disease Challenges in the New Millenium: Spotlight on Diabetes Mellitus and



The SAFMR and the SSCI were pleased to present 47 Trainee Awards at the 2000 Southern Section meeting.

HIV," was well attended and provided a broad scientific overview of these chronic diseases. The meeting was topped off with the Jazz Luncheon on Saturday afternoon.

The SAFMR also elected its new leadership during the Southern meeting. Dr. David Guidot (Emory University and the Atlanta VA Medical Center) will be Chair of the SAFMR



Wei Chen, of Tulane University and a SAFMR Young Faculty Research Award winner was presented with an award for the best abstract by Jane Geraci, immediate past chair of the SAFMR during the SAFMR Plenary Session.



The SAFMR was pleased to present the 2000 Young Faculty Research Awards during the SAFMR Plenary Session.

for the coming year, and Dr. Susan Ray (Emory University) was elected SAFMR Chair-elect. The Southern Section AFMR and the AFMR National Council would like to thank Dr. Jane Geraci (Houston VAMC and

Baylor College of Medicine) for her dedication and active participation in the SAFMR as Chair of the Southern Section over the past year. We look forward to working with Dr. Geraci as she assumes her new position as chair-elect

SUSAN RAY

Following the February 2000 meeting, Susan Ray began her term as Chair-Elect of the Southern Section. Dr. Ray is currently Assistant Professor of Medicine in Infectious Diseases at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, GA. She has attended the Southern Section meeting every year since 1995 and has mentored medical students who have presented at each meeting. She enjoys the opportunity for interaction with other medical disciplines and also likes the manageable size of the conference which allows for good discussion. She believes that the Southern meeting is a great place for students and fellows to present their work and expanded participation from students and AFMR members should be encouraged. She also believes that AFMR-supported lobbying efforts are important to the future of medical research.

Dr. Ray also serves as Assistant Hospital Epidemiologist at Grady Memorial Hospital. She was awarded the Young Faculty Award in 1996 and 1997. She is the principal investigator for the Pneumococcal Vaccine Intervention Project at Grady Health System, which is supported by the National Vaccine Program and the Center for Disease Control through the Emerging Infections Program. ■

for the Southern Society of General Internal Medicine. The 2001 Southern Sections meeting will be held in New Orleans, **March 1-3, 2001.** ■

AFMR Raises Concerns about Funding for the GCRC Program



Dr. Diane Wara, MD, immediate past-president of the GCRC Program Directors' Association met with Representative Brian Bilbray (R-CA) during a visit to Washington. Representative Bilbray became a co-sponsor of the Clinical Research Enhancement Act following this meeting.

OVER THE PAST YEAR, the AFMR and the GCRC Program Directors' Association have been working to increase overall funding for the General Clinical Research Centers (GCRC).

Last year, in response to these efforts, fifteen Senators sent a letter to then-NIH Director Varmus urging him to make the GCRC program a priority within the National Center for Research Resources. Nevertheless, from within overall budget growth of 20%, the NCRP provided an increase of only 2.5% for the GCRC program in FY 2000.

Since the beginning of the year, the AFMR has turned its attention to the FY 2001 budget cycle, asking Members of Congress to encourage NIH to make the GCRC program a higher priority and, at a minimum, provide the Centers with increases commensurate with NIH-wide growth. In late March, then-AFMR President William Lowe sent a letter to HHS Appropriations Subcommittee Chairs Arlen Specter

(R-Pa) and John Porter (R-Il) asking them to assure that the GCRCs receive a substantial increase in FY 2001 to compensate for disproportionately small growth in FY 2000. The letter recommended a budget of \$295 million for the coming year.

Senator Specter has responded to these concerns. The report accompanying the FY 2001 Senate HHS Appropriations bill stated that "the Committee is concerned about the GCRCs' growth rate, especially when compared to the overall NCRP budget increases."

The report stated that the Committee expected NCRP to utilize a portion of the \$100 million increase provided in its FY 2001 bill "to address the historical underfunding of the GCRCs and strengthen their ability to translate scientific discoveries into new therapies for the benefit of patients."

On the House side, HHS Subcommittee members have also raised concerns about the underfunding of the GCRCs. During NIH budget hearings, Representatives Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and Nita Lowey (D-NY) followed up on their concerns about the small FY 2000 increase by asking several detailed questions. Dr. Ruth Kirschstein, acting NIH director, was asked why the NIH did not provide a significant increase for the GCRC program in FY 2000 despite the strong Congressional interest in the program. In addition, she was asked to outline her plans for the GCRC program in FY 2001. She will be responding to all of these questions in writing shortly.

In the coming months, the AFMR Washington Office will be working with members of Congress to secure a significant increase for the GCRC program in FY 2001. In addition, AFMR is working to secure final passage of the Clinical Research Enhancement Act (see above), which would authorize the GCRCs in statute and give them greater "status" within the Congressional budgeting process. ■

Update on Clinical Research Enhancement Act

AS REPORTED in the last newsletter, the Senate has passed the Clinical Research Enhancement Act (S. 1813) and AFMR has undertaken aggressive efforts to advocate House passage of the legislation prior to adjournment for the November elections. In addition to establishing the GCRC program in law (see below), the bill authorizes funding for the new K23, K24 and K30 clinical research awards, authorizes a loan repayment program for clinical investigators, and creates individual tuition/stipend awards for K30 program trainees. If you would like to contact your Representative about the bill, a model letter can be downloaded from the AFMR website (www.afmr.org). ■

Budget Battle, *continued from page 1*

steady but the number of new/competing grants would drop by 15% as a result of the large number of non-competing grants. The President's proposed budget includes a \$16 million increase for the General Clinical Research Center program in FY 2001.

The AFMR has joined with the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research Funding to support a 15% increase for the NIH. This increase would bring the overall NIH budget to \$20.5 billion and is the next step in the effort to double the NIH budget in five years. Within that total, AFMR is recommending a GCRC budget of \$295 million to restore funding for this program, which has not kept pace with NIH-wide budget growth over the past several decades (see related story on page 6).

During mark up on the FY 2001 appropriations bill, Senate HHS Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Arlen Specter (R-Pa) successfully championed the \$20.5 billion NIH budget. Funding at this level was approved by the full Senate Appropriations Committee, and the bill awaits Senate floor consideration. House Appropriations Committee action was imminent as this newsletter went to press.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), formerly the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, received a \$46 million increase in the President's proposed budget. This includes a \$20 million increase to develop a broad research initiative on medical errors as recommended by the Institute of Medicine report, "To Err is Human." In May, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a \$71 million increase for AHRQ but directed the Agency to spend \$50 million on the medical errors initiative. This would leave an increase of only \$21 million for all remaining AHRQ programs, and

AFMR has expressed concern that this may exacerbate the underfunding of investigator-initiated research grants. The AHRQ estimates that new investigator-initiated grants will account for only \$13 million of current year spending, and under the President's request, only \$8 million was provided for competing research grants. The AFMR is supporting the Senate-approved budget but is working to assure that the investigator-initiated research grant program receives a more substantial increase in FY 2001.

Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Research Program

Despite the strong record of the VA research program, President Clinton did not provide an increase to the program in his FY 2001 proposed budget. Through its leadership position on the Friends of VA Coalition (FOVA), the AFMR is supporting a budget of \$386 million, a 20% increase, for VA research program. The FOVA recommendation includes \$43 million for the expansion of the investigator-initiated grant programs and \$10 million to expand the research career training program. The AFMR will continue to monitor the use of VERA research funds at the local level and has asked Congress to extend this allocation system for an additional year so that it can be evaluated. House Appropriations Committee action was imminent as this newsletter went to press. The Senate VA Appropriations Subcommittee was expected to take up its bill in mid-June.

Through the remainder of the Congressional session, AFMR's Washington office will continue to work with Congressional supporters to secure significant increases for the NIH, the VA research program and the AHRQ. Updates will appear in future issues of the *AFMR News* and on the AFMR website, and email alerts are being sent out prior to House or Senate action. If you would like to contact your Senators/Representatives, model letters can be downloaded from the AFMR website (www.afmr.org). ■

CALENDAR *of Events*

2000

September

September 8, 2000

Symposium on the Clinical Implications of the PPAR Gamma Nuclear Receptor System
Seaport Boston Hotel
Boston, MA

AFMR Foundation introduces the new series of Hot Topic Meetings.

September 21-23, 2000

Midwestern Regional Meeting
The Drake Hotel
Chicago, IL

Abstract deadline: **May 1, 2000**

2001

February

February 7-10, 2001

Western Regional Meeting
The Sunset Center
Carmel, CA

March

March 1-3, 2001

Southern Regional Meeting
The Fairmont Hotel
New Orleans, LA

March 9-11, 2001

Clinical Research 2001
Washington, DC

March 31-April 4, 2001

AFMR-sponsored Sessions
At Experimental Biology 2001
Orlando, FL

For More Information

Check out our website at
www.afmr.org or
contact us at **202-543-7032** or
by e-mail at **admin@afmr.org**

Mark Your Calendars!

 September 8, 2000

Symposium on the Clinical
Implications of the PPAR Gamma
Nuclear Receptor System

Boston, Massachusetts

LATER THIS YEAR, the American Federation for Medical Research will inaugurate a new series of symposia on "hot topics" in biomedical research. The AFMR Hot Topics Symposia series will provide the opportunity for basic and clinical researchers from various scientific and medical disciplines to hear presenta-

tions on the latest medical discoveries and stimulate new paths of scientific inquiry. The first symposia, to be held in Boston on September 8, will focus on the PPAR gamma nuclear receptor system. Although thiazolidinediones, a class of drugs that activates the PPAR gamma receptor, are now available for the treatment of diabetes, important new research suggests that activation of this system may be important in the pathogenesis or treatment of other disease processes. Accordingly, national and interna-

tional experts who have been performing cutting-edge research on the PPAR gamma nuclear receptor system will discuss implications of their work for the treatment of diabetes, obesity, inflammatory bowel disease, cancer, AIDS, and polycystic ovarian syndrome. AFMR members will receive discounted registration to this meeting. The program and registration information will be distributed to all AFMR members shortly. Information is also available on the AFMR website: www.afmr.org. ■

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