



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Osteoporosis and related metabolic bone diseases represent major public health problems in this country. However, there was little organized effort at UAB focused on research and clinical care for this group of diseases. Based on this, we held several open meetings of general faculty in the spring of 1995 that formed the basis for creating such a center. The Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama approved the formation of the Center for Metabolic Bone Disease (CMBD) in April 1996 and was approved as a pilot university-wide center in October 1996.

CMBD's aim is to provide a broad-based multidisciplinary research, training, and service center. The center will focus on metabolic bone disease with a general mission to support, promote, and integrate clinical activities, clinical research, and basic research. Our current faculty membership is a diverse group consisting of fifty-one members from six schools.

Dr. Harry Blair, Bruce Julian, John Cuckler, Xu Cao, and Jack Lemons, supported by other members of the CMBD submitted a multimillion dollar grant proposal to establish an NIH special center for research. If funded, this grant will develop new strategies to reduce bone loss and related complications of steroid therapy.

The Center decided that a newsletter will be a two-way communication link. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Marsha Moore by E-mail at CMBD@path.uab.edu or call 205-934-6666.

In this first issue, Dr. Xu Cao, the newly recruited director of the Human Bone Cell Core Facility, will discuss the capability of this new resource facility. His broad range of expertise in human bone cell production and biology can help investigators design experiments and develop hypotheses. Dr. Cao's recruitment from Washington University and start-up funds for the core lab, are provided by funding from the HSF/GEF, Cell Adhesion and Matrix Research Center and the Department of Pathology. We are excited about this new core facility and the expertise Dr. Cao brings to our research community.

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THE HUMAN BONE CELL CORE FACILITY

The Human Bone Cell Core Facility has been established and is designed to assist investigators at UAB who want to initiate programs using human bone cells and bone cell precursors. The Core Facility is currently isolating human bone cells from surgical femur heads and ribs and is the first facility in this region of the country to have human cells to provide to investigators. It will provide human osteoblast stem cells, osteoblasts, macrophages and osteoclasts as its first focus of activity.

In the future, we anticipate that adenovirus-mediated gene expression, tetracycline regulated gene stable expression and other related molecular biological techniques will be provided as needed. In addition, if funding from a recently submitted NIH SCOR grant is successful, the Core Facility will expand to provide measurement of selected markers of bone metabolism for patient and animal studies and will analyze biopsy sections in a standardized and coordinated manner.

We believe this is a unique facility and encourage investigators to call and discuss potential research applications and uses of the Core Facility expertise. Please contact us at: Xu Cao, Ph.D., Director, Human Bone Cell Core Facility, The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Volker Hall G019, 1670 University Boulevard, Birmingham, AL 35294-0019.

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June 1997