

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

During the past several months, the CMBD has applied for (1) a NIH Institutional Research Training Grant entitled "Comprehensive Training Grant in Bone Biology", and (2) a NIH Research Core Center Grant entitled "UAB Core Center for Musculoskeletal Disorders". The training grant is designed to provide the interdisciplinary education and research opportunities that are required for the effective and strategic development of independent research scientists who are capable of making significant contributions to this field. This application includes predoctoral positions and postdoctoral positions in both basic and clinical research who will receive training under the guidance of 23 investigators within the CMBD.

The goal of the CMBD's NIH Research Core Center grant is to use a coordinated interdisciplinary approach to identify and characterize the key mechanisms underlying bone loss and regeneration and the systemic and local factors that regulate these processes, as a basis for the development of innovative therapeutic strategies. This application includes three cores and three pilot and feasibility projects (P&F). **Core A:** Administrative Core, Jay M. McDonald, MD, P.I.; **Core B:** Human Bone Cell Production Core, Xu Cao, Ph.D., P.I.; **Core C:** Histomorphometry and Molecular Analyses Core, Gene P. Siegal, MD, PhD, P.I.; **P&F #1:** Adhesion of Osteoblasts to Implant Materials, Susan L. Bellis, PhD, P.I.; **P&F #2:** The Function of Smad3 in Osteoblast Differentiation, Xingming Shi, PhD, P.I.; and **P&F #3:** Role of PYK2 and FAK in Regulating Osteoclastic Bone Resorption, Wen-Cheng Xiong, MD, PhD, P.I.

I am also pleased to inform you about another exciting event. Dr. Kenneth G. Saag, a member of the CMBD Steering Committee, has recently received funding from NIH for his CERT application entitled "UAB Center for Education and Research on Therapeutics". Below is a synopsis of this Center.

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CENTER ESTABLISHED FOR RESEARCH ON MUSCULOSKELETAL THERAPEUTICS

UAB has received a three-year, \$805,000 grant from the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ) to establish one of five national Centers for Education and Research on Therapeutics (CERTs). CERTs are cooperative agreements with the AHRQ and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The UAB Center began operations on July 1, 2000 under the leadership of Associate Professors Kenneth Saag (Medicine), who serves as Director, and Jeroan Allison (Medicine), who is Co-director.

Dealing with musculoskeletal disorders, the Center will evaluate new therapies, serve as an information exchange, and enhance collaboration between researchers. According to Saag, "Musculoskeletal disorders affect more than 40 million Americans and are the leading cause of activity limitations." He added that "Health-care costs for arthritis and osteoporosis alone exceed \$75 billion a year."

CERTs will evaluate the effectiveness and safety of new therapies for musculoskeletal disorders and will guide physicians in the use of these therapies. Saag noted that "In just the past five years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of new therapies approved by the FDA to treat musculoskeletal disorders." He said that, as a result, "Physicians are faced with difficult questions about how best to use a new therapy in an efficient and cost-effective manner."

The Center will also serve as an information exchange, gathering the latest research and sharing it with practitioners, insurers, policy makers, and the general public. "Our emphasis will be on educating physicians using evidence-based guidelines, quality care indicators and peer performance," said Saag.

Additionally, the Center will work with researchers representing various disciplines across the university as well as other public and private research institutions. The CERTs will be housed in the Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Center and will draw upon expertise from the Center for Metabolic Bone Disease, the Center for Outcomes Research and Education, and the General Clinical Research Center.

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