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PASPCR Newsletter

March 2005
Vol. **13** Number **1**

Introduction...

by Bill Oetting

Plans for the 2005 International Pigment Cell Conference are going full speed ahead. Important dates that you need to be aware of for the IPCC can be found on page 3. You should note that the dates for Abstract submission, Travel Stipend applications and early Registration is May 1. We have also noted that the PASPCR has a new sister society, the Asian Society for Pigment Cell Research (ASPCR). Their first meeting was held in New Delhi, India. There is a report from our President, who attended the inaugural meeting of the ASPCR, along with a few pictures on pages 3 and 4. It is exciting to see that pigment cell research is expanding and I am looking forward to future interactions between members of the ASPCR and the PASPCR. Information on the ASPCR can be found at their web site at **www.aspcr.org.**

The ***PASPCR Newsletter*** is published quarterly and is intended to serve as a means of communication for the members of our Society. You are invited to contribute articles, or other information you feel will be of interest to members of the **PASPCR**. If you attend a scientific meeting and have heard results which you think will be of interest to the membership of the PASPCR, please write a few paragraphs summarizing what was presented and share it with us. Any information on upcoming meetings of interest will be added to the "Calendar of Events". This is your newsletter, and we depend upon you to help us make sure it best serves the Society's needs. Contributions and comments can be sent to me, preferably by E-mail, to bill@lenti.med.umn.edu.

The PASPCR Web Site is the major, up-to-date source of current information for the PASPCR membership and for individuals who are interested in the PASPCR. If there is additional information that you would like to see on the Web site, or you would like to include information of past PASPCR activities, please let me know and I will add them.

The IFPCS web site can now be reached by using the domain name **ifpcs.org**. The domain name **ipcc.info** will take you to the IPCC web site, providing you the most up to date information on the International Pigment Cell Conference which will be held on September 18 - 22, 2005 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Reston, VA.

The PASPCR Web Site can be found at:

http://www.paspcr.org

In this Issue . . . . .

The PanAmerican Society for Pigment Cell Ressarch

C/O Dr. Raymond E. Boissy
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past-President PASPCR

Calendar of Events:

May 4-7, 2005 -- 66th Annual Meeting of the Society of Investigative Dermatology, to be held in America's Center, St. Louis, MO.
Contact: Go to http://www.sidnet.org/ for more information.

Sept 18-22, 2005 -- XIVth International Pigment Cell Conference (IPCC), to be held near Washington DC, USA.
Contact: Dr. Vince. Hearing
E-mail: hearingv@nih.gov
Web: www.ipcc.info

Sept 22-24, 2005 -- 35th Annual European Society of Dermatological Research, to be held at Tübingen, Germany.
Contact: office@esdr.org
Web site: www.esdr.ch

Sept 24-27, 2006 -- 13th meeting of the European Society for Pigment Cell Research, to be held in Barcelona, Spain. Information can be obtained at www.cnb.uam.es/~espcr06/.
Contact: Lluís Montoliu (Madrid, CNB-CSIC).
E-mail: espcr06@cnb.uam.es.

If you know of future meetings that you feel would be of interest to the PASPCR membership, please let us know.

The *PASPCR Newsletter* is published quarterly by the PanAmerican Society for Pigment Cell Research. All views are those of the authors. For further information or to submit articles, please contact members of the Publications Committee.

Corporate Sponsors
by Raymond E. Boissy

The PASPCR would like to acknowledge and thank our Corporate Sponsors; the list below reflects contributions over the past 2 years. Financial gifts from these sponsors have allowed our Society to increase benefits to the membership far out of proportion to the actual dues collected from members. Monies contributed by these sponsors have been used over the years to support various PASPCR functions including our Young Investigator Award program, meeting travel stipends, annual meeting expenses and this Newsletter.

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IPCC update

Below are some important dates for the International Pigment Cell Conference. Remember, for the latest information, go to the IPCC web site at **ipcc.info**. This site has forms for registration, fees, and preliminary information on the scientific program.

Important Dates:

- Jan 1, 2005 - Web site [www.ipcc.info] becomes fully functional for Abstract submission, early Registration, Travel Stipend application and Hotel reservations.
- May 1, 2005 - deadline for Abstract submission, Travel Stipend applications and early Registration.
- June 30, 2005 - notification of Abstract scheduling and decisions on Travel Stipends.
- Aug 24, 2005 - deadline for normal Registration and Hotel reservations.
- Sept 18-22, 2005 - the 19th International Pigment Cell Conference
- Sept 23, 2005 - Satellite Symposia

Greetings to the Members and Friends of the PASPCR,

I am very pleased to be writing my first column as your president. Zalfa Abdul-Malek did such an outstanding job before me, that it is also with some anxiety that I face the up-coming three years. But I will try my best. To help in that regard, I am pleased to welcome Frank Meskens as our new President-Elect, and Giselle Thibaudeau, Bill Pavan, and Bill Oetting as new council members. I have to tell you that I really love this society. I began my associations with pigment cell biologists even before we had a name, when in 1971 Aaron Lerner hired me as an assistant professor at Yale (I was 29 then, I am 63 now.) I remember my first pigment cell meeting. It was at Yale, 1973, and Aaron had asked me to give my first-ever talk. Sat morning, 8:30, I was so nervous that I couldn't point the flashlight. When it was over, Thomas Fitzpatrick came up and thanked me for contributing to the projects that he and Aaron had started. I still don't know if that was a compliment, but it was true. It was also at that meeting that I met Vince Hearing for the first time. Now we are old friends, growing up together in the world of pigment cell biology. So many others have made up that world. The mighty trio of Vince, Dick King, and Jim Nordlund that charted and steered our course for so many years, and Joe Bagnara, our first newsletter editor. Ray Boissy (Secretary-Treasurer) and Bill Oetting (Newsletter), who continue to work long and hard behind the scenes. And many, many others. But most of all it has been the scientists. The ones who decided to commit at least a portion of their careers to studying the fascinating world of biopigmentation. Normal and abnormal, in arthropods, fish, birds, mice, rats, rabbits, dogs, horses, humans. In UV protection, melanoma, vitiligo, albinism, camoflage, embryonic development, species recognition, and human social interactions. Members of the PASPCR have consistently lead the research in these areas. It is my goal to make sure that we stay healthy, that we grow, and most of all, that we continue our wonderfully productive research.

In February, 2005, I had the unique opportunity to participate in the inauguration of a new pigment cell

society, when I attended the first meeting of the Asian Society for Pigment Cell Research in New Delhi. It took me back to Aaron's Yale conference in 1973. It was fresh and electric. Many of the participants spoke on vitiligo, a disorder of major concern in the region. I was representating the PASPCR. There were also representatives of the ESPCR and the JSPCR, and Dot Bennett, President of the IFPCR. Invited speakers from the USA were Dr. Caroline LePoole, who nicely presented her very interesting work on the role of cellular immunity in vitiligo, and Dr. Vijay Setaluri who gave an excellent overview of the molecular biology of pigmentary system. I returned feeling invigorated by the enthusiasm of the meeting. I hope to keep it with me while leading the PASPCR. And I hope that each of you will continue to participate in our society, and will encourage others to join—students, post-docs, colleagues. Be sure to attend the IPCC in September, 2005 (abstract deadline May 1). Vince and Betsy Hearing have organized a great meeting, and you won't want to miss it! See you there.

Best regards to all,

John Pawelek, PhD
President, PASPCR

Dr. John Pawelek, representing the PASPCR, lighting a candle during the inaugural ceremonies of the ASPCR.

Dot Bennett, President, IFPCR, and John Pawelek, President, PASPCR, helped to open the inaugural meeting of the Asian Society for Pigment Cell Research, New Delhi, India, February, 2005.

Dr. Caroline LePoole of the PASPCR presenting her work on vitiligo and the cellular immune system at the first meeting of the ASPCR. Also from the PASPCR,

Research in the PASPCR
Giselle Thibaudeau

I will start by introducing myself to those of you who may not recognize my name from days gone by. I received my Ph.D. under the direction of Sally Frost-Mason at the University of Kansas. My entrance into the *PASPCR* was through Sally and my dissertation work, *Factors Affecting Early Pattern Formation in the White Mutant Axolotl*. What is the Axolotl? In fact, many people ask the same question. *Ambystoma mexicanum*, the Mexican Axolotl, is a neotenic, aquatic salamander that has provided a model system for many researchers interested in early developmental processes. There was a time when the axolotl was *the ideal* model system for studies of embryonic development and the neural crest because 1) development is external, 2) embryos are large and relatively easy to manipulate, 3) there are a large number of embryos per spawning, 4) the neural crest preferentially gives rise to differentiated pigment cells in vitro, 5) there are three neural crest-derived pigment cell types, and 6) there are several well-characterized pigment mutants. This suite of features make it a superior research animal for some projects relative to other models. The mottled, dark olive/black color of wild-type axolotls is the result of the distribution, density, and arrangement of melanophores (black, melanin-containing cells), xanthophores (yellow, pteridine-containing cells), and iridophores (reflective, purine-containing cells). Having three closely-related cell lineages, all derived from a common embryonic origin, allows one to ask questions about cell differentiation and cell decision-making processes.

The white mutant axolotl is characterized by a lack of all pigment cells in the skin. The white embryo is indistinguishable from the wild-type embryo until hatching stage when the existing melanophores disappear and leave the larvae devoid of pigmentation. The white mutant is a black-eyed, white animal very different from the more common albino mutant. Prior to the 1980s, the white mutant was viewed as a lesion intrinsic to the neural crest cells. By the early 1980s, the extracellular matrix was hypothesized to play a role in the defective migration and/or differentiation of the neural crest in the white mutant. My dissertation work identified two factors contributing to the white mutation. There is an intrinsic, age-specific, and developmentally-regulated defect exhibited by white neural crest cells and an extrinsic substance produced by white axolotl skin that actively inhibits the migration and differentiation of the neural crest-derived pigment cell population.

Although my axolotl work was exciting and the pigment cell community was supportive and encouraging, I had the opportunity to do postdoctoral work with Malcolm Steinberg at Princeton University and participate in work on cell adhesion mechanisms. I used the axolotl as a model system. I did some very exciting work while in that lab, but for the purpose of this article, I will stick with my pigment cell studies.

While at Princeton, I collaborated with Bill Pavan, now at the NIH, and attempted to sway my interests from amphibian pigmentation to mammalian pigmentation. As difficult as this may be to hear for many of you, I just could not do it. Mice are interesting creatures but are not as esthetically pleasing as amphibians; and severeal factors of their biology and development prohibit certain studies of interest to me. Internal development makes embryo manipulations more difficult, housing and care is more cumbersome, and there is only one neural crest-derived pigment cell type which produces only melanin that is deposited in the keratinocytes of the skin or hair follicles. One has never seen a mouse with the variety of colors and patterns seen in the amphibian. With this knowledge and view in my mind, I decided to continue with studies of pigment cell biology when I accepted a job at Mississippi State University (MSU), where I am currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences.

Much of the research focus in my lab has addressed cellular processes that contribute to or govern neural crest cell migration and differentiation of the various pigment cell lineages. Results of various studies support the hypothesis that spatial and temporal differences among premigratory trunk neural crest cells found along the anteroposterior axis influence developmental potentials and diminish the equivalency of axolotl neural crest cells. Results also demonstrate the potential for the occurrence of cellular plasticity among the different pigment cell lineages that is indicative of transdifferentiation events. Much of these data was collected and published prior to 2000.

What has happened since then? My graduate students graduated, I married and had two children, l teach full time, and began working with more undergraduate students and still collected data. I did not find the time nor the energy to publish the results until now.

I will spend a bit of time here to tell you about my research over the past few years and will then summarize my activities with undergraduate students. My research lab is currently involved in studies designed to identify melanophore à xanthophore interactions that ultimately lead to pigment pattern formation in the axolotl. Several graduate and undergraduate students have collected some amazing data sets that identify important cellular parameters involved in pigment cell-lineage decision events.

· Spatial and temporal differences that influence the differentiation of pigment cell lineages of pigment mutant axolotls.
· GIS, Spatial Analysis tools to identify influences of cell migration and cell-cell interactions on the differentiation of pigment cells and pattern formation (in vitro).
· Interactions between melanophores/xanthophores establish different pigment patterns in larval salamanders (in vivo).
· Developmental expression of tyrosinase-related protein-1 in the axolotl, using quantitative PCR.

In addition to these studies, with the *Axolotl Genome* on the horizon and a desire to maintain research on the axolotl neural crest as a model, I have begun collaborations with David Parichy, who is known for his work on the evolution of pigment pattern in salamanders and more recently zebrafish. Projects that are currently underway in my lab include:

· Development of an axolotl neural crest-cell specific cDNA library and we are in the process of creating a pigment-cell specific cDNA library.
· Identify *fms,* a receptor tyrosine kinase and potential pigment-cell specific gene in the axolotl.
· 3-D imaging of melanophore/xanthophore interactions during the establishment of pattern.
· Correlate *fms* expression with melanophore/xanthophore interactions and pattern formation.

Most of these studies have been carried out by undergraduate students, either for credit, wages, or for the pure enjoyment of doing real hands-on research. The axolotl is an excellent model for training of students, graduate or undergraduate. Much of the pleasure of my job, as a faculty member at a research institution, is that gained from my interaction with enthusiastic, wide-eyed students, especially when they first realize that they too can inquire, experiment, and find joy in the discovery. In addition to my title and responsibilities in the Department of Biological Sciences, I am an Associate Faculty at the Center for Science, Mathematics, and Technology at MSU and am very interested and proactive in finding funds and opportunities to involve undergraduate students in research in my laboratory, across campus, across disciplines, and at other institutions. I believe that undergraduate involvement in the research enterprise is mutually beneficial for the student and the research university.

Let me close by saying thank you to the members of *PASPCR* for being accommodating, welcoming, and inclusive of me, my students, model organisms, and research questions. I look forward to many years of involvement in the society.

A letter from the new PASPCR Editor

By Colin Goding

Jose Carlos Garcia Boron came up to me a few years ago and said ' I hear you will be the next editor of Pigment Cell Research'. That was news to me; at that time I didn't even know there was to be a new editor, and the thought that I might end up taking over from Vince Hearing had never occurred to me. Some time later I was asked whether I would be willing to do the job of Editor if I were elected. My immediate response was no - it seemed like extra work with little reward and I had no ideas about what I might bring to the journal. But, the most persuasive of individuals, Dot Bennett, somehow convinced me that I should at least allow myself to be nominated. When I was elected, I realised that reality had caught up with me and I had better start thinking a bit about what I should do. The task of taking over as a new editor is not easy. Given the success that Vince has had in raising the profile of the journal I felt I was unlikely to do any better and most likely would end up doing a lot worse.

My immediate thought was that I could serve the research community best if I could somehow raise the profile of the journal and attract as wide a readership as possible. With that aim, and with the strong support of the publisher, I set about redesigning the format of the journal to make it look as modern and visually exciting as possible, something that has become possible with new technology and reduced costs of colour reproduction and which was not available when Vince took over as editor. The result, the first issue I have produced as Editor, appeared this month with Randy Morrison's chameleon on the cover. I hope you liked it.

Over the coming months additional changes that I hope will make the journal more accessible and more useful those of us interested in pigment cells will appear: the web site is being reorganised with a number of new features and should be up and running in a couple of months; the reviews that have proved so popular, are now freely available; papers accepted for publication are now accessible online ahead of their appearance in print as soon as the final proofs have been approved by the authors. All these changes are designed to make Pigment Cell Research an indispensable resource for the pigment cell community.

An additional aim is to broaden the readership of the journal, in part by attracting readers from the

melanoma field. Since melanoma proliferation and melanocyte development are tightly linked, the artificial gulf that exists between melanoma researchers and those more interested in basic melanocyte biology should be narrowed. There will therefore appear a series of melanoma-related reviews designed to stimulate interest in the journal.

In addition, I feel strongly that if work on pigment cells is to remain dynamic we need to attract researchers from other fields that can bring with them new ideas and complementary expertise. For that reason some of the upcoming reviews will focus on genes which have an interest beyond their role in melanocytes and melanoma and I will also be active in trying to persuade people I meet that melanocytes are a wonderful model system for addressing important questions that may be difficult to answer using any other cell type. This I hope will benefit us all.

The editorial policy is simple: to publish and promote to as wide an audience as possible papers in all areas of pigment cell biology that are scientifically sound and advance our knowledge of these cells. Obviously, to publish unsound papers with no value would not be in the interests of the pigment cell community. Indeed, although we frequently tend to view publication of papers as a means to further our own careers, the primary purpose of publication should in principal be the dissemination of information that helps the progress of science.

I should also stress that my primary aim as editor is not to increase the impact factor of the journal simply for the sake of doing so. There are many papers currently published in Pigment Cell Research that perhaps are less well cited than they should be. But this does not mean that they should not be published. Rather, any paper in which the science is sound and that makes a nice contribution to the field may find a home in the journal. In this respect it is important to note that impact factor is affected only partly by the quality of paper. It is also heavily influenced by readership; if a paper is not read its value to the community is minimal and as a secondary effect, low readership also means low citations.

The changes to the journal outlined above are therefore designed primarily to fulfil the aim of having papers in PCR read by as wide an audience as possible. This I hope will also lead to an increase in impact factor without raising the bar for publication. The quality of papers submitted is really in the hands of authors, although I would encourage all of you with an interest in pigment cell biology or function to submit to the journal. However, while I want to serve the community as much as possible, part of that service is to act as a gatekeeper on the quality of papers published in PCR. Given a limited budget for publication not all papers submitted can or should be accepted. In other words there must be a certain measure of quality that ensures acceptance. In this respect, it might be useful to review some of the criteria used that determine the suitability of a paper for publication.

First, if a paper is very descriptive and offers no insight into the mechanisms underlying the phenomenon being described it is unlikely to get past the referee. Thus a paper on vitiligo that examines some of the likely mechanisms underlying the disease, from autoimmunity to stress sensitivity of the melanocytes may be acceptable; but a manuscript that simply describes the patterns of vitiligo in Oxted, without trying to get a novel insight into the causes of vitiligo in general is unlikely to be published. Similarly to describe the pattern of pigmentation of an organism without furthering our understanding of how that pattern is generated is also unlikely to get published.

The data in any paper should be as novel as possible; if a paper simply reiterates observations made by others several years ago, it probably doesn't help advance our current state of knowledge by much and as such is unlikely to be published. On the other hand if a you are working on something interesting and novel and get 'scooped' by another group publishing in a high profile journal but nevertheless initiated the research in your laboratory independently, I would definitely consider taking your paper since there is a place for manuscripts that support another group's findings, especially is there is some added value in the form of some additional observations. However, timing is everything, and the sooner your paper arrives on my desk the better chance it gets of being accepted as I would not consider a paper that originated as someone else's idea.

Also, I should point out that if you have a paper rejected from a 'high profile' journal I would consider taking a look and the review process can be speeded up considerably if you also send me the referees comments from the other journal. Of course, if the referees point out a fatal flaw in your conclusions, the paper will be doomed whichever journal you send it to. On the other hand, Pigment Cell Research has a

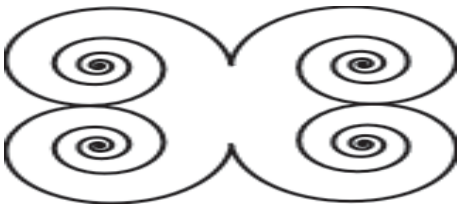
slightly different agenda from many journals in that it aims to inform and advance our knowledge of pigment cells; and sometimes what might be too preliminary for a broad interest journal may just be exciting enough for a journal devoted to these interesting cell types.

It also helps if your paper is well presented, that the figures are self explanatory, and that the abstract and introduction actually detail the background to the work, the important question being addressed as well as your key results and conclusions. A well presented paper that appears important and tells a nice story will make referees far more likely to recommend acceptance than a paper where the results are thrown together without any attempt to indicate why the study was undertaken or the importance of the conclusions reached.

Finally if you feel you have a good story and are thinking of where to send it you can also just send me the abstract and ask my opinion as to whether it might be suitable for publication. Indeed, given my experience of editors and submission to a variety of journals, one of my aims is to be as author- and reviewer-friendly as possible (which is why currently the submission process is simply 'send me a PDF' rather than going through the frustration of completing a lot of online forms only to find that the computer freezes in the middle of the process).

So for all of you out there, I encourage you to send your papers in the PCR where, if it is published, it will be read by wide and interested audience; and if it is rejected, don't take it personally. From my own extensive experience of rejection, most of the referees are trying to be helpful and will attempt to suggest interesting experiments and point you towards improving your work. Its always tough to accept referees' comments after investing so much in your work, but in the end the referees were probably right and always revised papers are better than those initially submitted.

I'll end by wishing you all great success in your research and hope to see some papers arrive before too long.



Positions Wanted and Available

Postings for **Positions Available** will be open to all individuals and institutions so long as the position is related to pigment cell research. Postings for **Positions Wanted** will be open only to members of the PanAmerican Society for Pigment Cell Research or its sister societies (JSPCR and ESPCR). Send postings to Bill Oetting at bill@lenti.med.umn.edu. Please provide an expiration date for any submitted postings. Final decisions will be made by the Publications Committee of the PASPCR.

Postdoctoral Position

Postdoctoral Position in the Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, UC Irvine is immediately available to study the signal transduction pathways in human melanoma for regulation of cell proliferation, differentiation and apoptosis. Prior knowledge or interest in redox metabolism would be useful.

A highly motivated individual with a background in molecular and cell biology is desired. All necessary training will be provided.

Please send your curriculum vitae, and contact information for at least two references to :

Frank Meyskens, M.D.
Professor of Medicine and Biological Chemistry
Director, Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center
Senior Associate Dean, Health Sciences College of Medicine
University of California Irvine Medical Center
101 The City Drive, Building 56, Room 216L
Orange, California 92868
Phone: (714) 456-6310
Fax: (714) 456-2240
Email: flmeyske@uci.edu

Postdoctoral Position

A postdoctoral position available in the laboratory of Dr. Andrew Aplin in the Center for Cell Biology and Cancer Research at Albany Medical College, NY. Research will focus on the critical signaling proteins involved in anchorage-dependent cell growth of melanocytes and that may be aberrantly regulated

Positions - Wanted and Available (*continued*)

in melanoma cells. Further details and recent publications can be obtained at http://www.amc.edu/academic/research/CBCResearcher.cfm?ID=170

Albany Medical College is located in the scenic Hudson River Valley, offering affordable housing, easy commutes and quick access to cultural (e.g., Saratoga, 45 min; Tanglewood, 1 hr), and outdoor activities (Adirondack State Park, 2 hr).

Candidates with a recent PhD or MD/PhD with a strong background in molecular and cellular biology are encouraged to apply. Excellent financial compensation and benefits are provided. Please submit a resume and the names of references to:

Andrew E. Aplin, Ph.D.
Center for Cell Biology & Cancer Research
Albany Medical College,
47 New Scotland Avenue
Albany, NY 12208
Email: aplina@mail.amc.edu

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Department of Dermatology Chair

The University of California, Irvine, College of Medicine seeks candidates for the position of Chair, Department of Dermatology. The candidate must be an accomplished investigator, clinician and teacher, eligible for appointment at the level of associate professor or professor, with leadership skills appropriate for a major university department. Send CV, plus names and addresses of at least three references to:

Frank L. Meyskens, Jr., M.D.
Chair, Dermatology Search Committee
c/o Kit Scott
UCI College of Medicine
Dean's Office
246 Irvine Hall
Irvine, CA 92697-3950

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Postdoctoral Position

A Postdoctoral Position is available to study the role of UV radiation in the development of primary melanoma. The project will use transgenic and pigment cell mutant mice and cell cultures to study molecular mechanisms of melanoma initiation and progression. A strong background in pigment cell biology, cellular mechanisms of toxicology, carcinogenesis, or molecular biology is desired. Send curriculum vitae, names of 3 references, and a brief summary of research interests to:

Faith M. Strickland, Ph.D.
Dermatology Research 4D49
Henry Ford Hospital
One Ford Place
Detroit, MI 48202
E-mail: FSTRICK1@hfhs.org
Phone: 313-874-3385
FAX: 313-874-3770.

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Postdoctoral Research Associate

Fox Chase Cancer Center.

Two NIH-funded postdoctoral positions are available to work on the development of neural crest–derived melanocytes and enteric neurons in mice. We are interested in the signals required for proper migration and differentiation of these lineages during mouse embryogenesis and use various genetic manipulation techniques and existing mutants for our studies. Fox Chase Cancer offers competitive salaries to its postdocs and was recently named one of the best places to work for Postdocs (http://www.fccc.edu/news/2003/Best-Places-for-Postdocs-02-20-2003.html). Candidates with a recent PhD or MD/PhD with strong background in molecular biology, genetics or developmental biology are encouraged to apply. Please submit CV, and names of 3 references to:

Dr. Myung K. Shin
Program in Cellular and Developmental Biology
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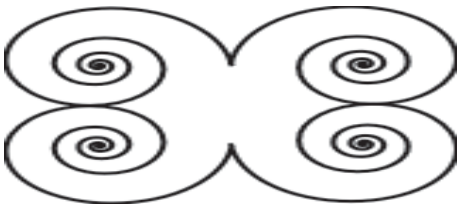
Philadelphia, PA 19111, USA
Email: MK_Shin@fccc.edu



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