**Lasker Awards Go to 3 Scientists and Doctors Without Borders**

The Lasker awards, among the most respected prizes in medicine, will go to three scientists who made groundbreaking discoveries in cancer and genetics, and to the aid group Doctors Without Borders.

Evelyn M. Witkin and Stephen J. Elledge shared the Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award for work they did independently of each other on the "DNA-damage response" - an array of actions that bacteria, yeast and human cells take to protect their genomes against an endless barrage of threats from chemicals, radiation and normal biochemical processes that go awry.

James P. Allison received the Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award for discovering and developing a cancer treatment that became the first of a new class of drugs called checkpoint inhibitors, which work by unleashing the immune system to fight cancer.

Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières in French) was given the Lasker-Bloomberg Public Service Award for bold leadership in fighting the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, and for sustained and effective front-line responses to health emergencies. Dr. Witkin, 94, is a bacterial geneticist and professor emerita at the Waksman Institute of Microbiology at Rutgers University. She began her career in the 1940s with investigations of genetic mutations in bacteria.

By the late 1960s, Dr. Witkin had discovered how ultraviolet light caused mutations in the bacteria E. coli. The ultraviolet rays caused changes in the DNA that prompted the cell to produce a new type of DNA-copying enzyme. But the new enzyme - called a "sloppier copier"-tended to make mistakes. And those mistakes were mutations.

Dr. Elledge, 59, is a professor of genetics and medicine at Harvard Medical School and the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Much of his research focuses on the genes and proteins involved in sensing and responding to DNA damage, and their roles in cancer and degenerative disorders of the nervous system.

Dr. Allison, 67, is Professor of Immunology, Chairman of the Immunology Department and Executive Director of the Immunology Platform at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Much of his research concerns T cells, a type of white blood cell that is sometimes described as a soldier of the immune system, deployed to seek and destroy invaders. For years, scientists tried to find ways to turn T cells against cancer, with little success. During the 1990s, Dr. Allison showed that a protein on T cells actually subdued the cells, apparently to dial back their ferocious activity and prevent autoimmune disorders. Dr. Allison wondered if it might be possible to unleash the T cells against cancer by blocking the protein - which came to be called a checkpoint - that was hobbling the cells. He developed an antibody that could block the protein. In mice with cancer, it worked to turn T cells against tumors.

The award citation to Doctors Without Borders said that the group had taken on the "monumental" task of fighting Ebola in West Africa, "a duty that rightly belongs to the international community" and not to an aid group funded mostly by donors. Despite numerous warnings from the group in early 2014 about the outbreak's scope and severity, the World Health Organization and the international community were slow to respond, and the disease spiraled out of control. More than 11,000 people have died. The epidemic is waning, but Doctors Without Borders remains in the region, building maternity and pediatric hospitals, vaccinating children, treating malaria and other local illnesses and providing mental health care. The group received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999.

---

**INSTITUTIONAL BIOSAFETY COMMITTEE (IBC)**

If you are a Principal Investigator performing research, bench or animal, you must submit a biosafety authorization protocol. Forms may be found at: [http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/research/AboutUs/health-safety/services/committees/Pages/committees.aspx](http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/research/AboutUs/health-safety/services/committees/Pages/committees.aspx) (cut/paste the url into your browser window).

Biosafety Authorizations expire every three (3) years and renewal notices are sent to Principal Investigators 3 months, 2 months and 1 month prior to their expiration date.

New, renewal and amendment submission deadlines are the first Monday of the month for review at the end of that month. For question regarding biosafety forms, submission process, etc. please call Candy Berryman at 303-724-5541.

---

**Recruitment of Technical Members**

We are currently recruiting additional members for the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). The IBC provides review of all recombinant DNA research conducted at UCDenver. We are particularly recruiting Technical Members to assist with the review and approval of research involving recombinant DNA. Technical members consist of Lab Managers and PRAs that are knowledgeable in rDNA research. The time commitment for members is a monthly 2 hour meeting and review of approximately 3-4 protocols/month. Approval from your PI for this time commitment is required. The IBC meets once per month; treats are provided! If you are interested in this opportunity for University community service, please contact Mark Douse at 303-724-1057.
Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to announce that Pam Vincent, a long-time member of the Office of Grants and Contracts (OGC) has accepted a new position heading and establishing a Compliance Financial Audit program within the Office of Regulatory Compliance. In this new position, Pam will work with various institutional and affiliate partners to maximize the fiscal integration of OnCore. Pam will also work closely with research teams on topics related to fiscal compliance of human subject research and continuing improvement of mechanisms for evaluating the return on investment of clinical trials to assist our research partners to manage their research portfolio. She will also still be involved with the OGC to assist with audit reviews and other efforts as defined by the Director of OGC.

Pam has been the Assistant Director of OGC since 2004 and has played an important role in the development of post award activity during that time. She had a key role in the OIG audit and in the implementation of key systems including the PeopleSoft upgrade of 2010, InfoEd, and the current Elevate 9.2 upgrade as well as helping to stabilize OGC through its changing leadership. Her dedication and service to OGC has been greatly appreciated. This new opportunity will allow Pam to build on her key skill sets and knowledge of the campus by providing a critical support role to the clinical research community as part of the newly formed Clinical Research Administration Office that will be opening on the ground floor of Building 500 in early 2016.

Please join us in congratulating Pam on this exciting new opportunity.

Dick Traystman and Alison Lakin

Richard J. Traystman, PhD
Distinguished University Professor

Alison Lakin RN, LLB, LLM, PhD
Assistant Vice Chancellor for Regulatory Compliance

---

**RESEARCH CORNER**

Dr. Dan Theodorescu is a physician-scientist who has emerged as a leading translational cancer researcher. Using a unique blend of computational and molecular biological tools, his laboratory discovered a new metastasis-suppressor gene, RhoGDI2, a predictor of metastasis development in bladder cancer, and provided the conceptual framework for discovering "druggable" molecular targets in metastatic cancers of all types. The Theodorescu laboratory used new technologies such as next generation sequencing, expression analysis and mass spectrometry-based proteomics to discover and develop additional biomarkers that could be multiplexed with the expectation that gene combinations would offer even better prognostic or diagnostic prediction than single genes.

Dan formulated the principles underlying what eventually became the CO-Expression Extrapolation (COXEN) bioinformatic tool. This tool is aimed at personalizing cancer therapy by identifying effective drugs in individual patients based on simple in vitro assays. COXEN is being tested by NCI/SWOG (S1314) an innovative precision medicine trial in bladder cancer. Using computational drug-docking algorithms, Dan developed the idea and then led the team that discovered the first “targeted” drug against the Ras GTPase, one in a class of oncogenes such as Ras previously deemed impossible to block using drugs. This drug is being developed for precision medicine clinical trials. Dr. Theodorescu’s work holds promise for several tumors: RhoGDI2 is a suppressor of bladder, colon and head and neck cancer; COXEN has been shown to predict clinical outcome in multiple cancers in addition to bladder; and the Ras drug may change treatment of many common cancers such as pancreatic, colon and lung cancer, which rely on this Ras pathway to grow and spread.

Dan has published more than 250 papers including in Nature, Science, JCI, PNAS and his laboratory is currently funded by grants from the NIH-NCI. He is the recipient of awards, participates on several boards as has been elected to the American Society for Clinical Investigation (ASCI), the American Association of Genitourinary Surgeons (AAGUS), the American Surgical Association (ASA) and the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) (formerly Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences). As Director of the University of Colorado Comprehensive Cancer Center (UCCC), he has led the center to election into the National Comprehensive Cancer (NCCN) and Oncology Research Information Exchange (ORIEN) Networks and rise from unranked to 15th cancer program in US News and World Report.

Dan received his MD from Queen’s University in Canada in 1986. He obtained his PhD from the University of Toronto in 1994. He completed a Fellowship in Urology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center Program in 1995.