Message from the Director

In this issue of *In Translation*, I’m excited to share with you a feature on La Shondra Ellis, a scholar in our Young Innovative Investigator Program; an introduction to the new CICATS Innovation Studio; coverage of the 2nd Women In Surgery Lectureship; a feature on the eHealth/mHealth Core Interest Group; and an article on the 30th annual MLK Jr. / Albert Owens Scholarship program in Meriden, CT.

I would also like to announce our upcoming UConn National Health Disparities Elimination Summit, to be held at UConn Health this June 12-13, please save the date. — *Cato T. Laurencin, M.D., Ph.D.*

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- **YIIP Experience: La Shondra Ellis**
  A CICATS Young Innovative Investigator Program (YIIP) scholar shares her first year experience in the program at UConn Health. — *Page 2*

- **2nd Women In Surgery Lectureship**
  Keynote speaker Dr. Andrea Hayes-Jordan provided an in depth talk on her innovative approach to treating children with rare abdominal cancers. — *Page 3*

- **eHealth/mHealth Core Interest Group and Science Café**
  Researching the role and effectiveness of integrating mobile and digital technology in the translation of scientific discoveries. — *Page 4*

- **Innovation Studio Leadership**
  CICATS announces the leadership team of our new initiative, the Innovation Studio. The Innovation Studio will serve as a resource for researchers from study design to commercialization. — *Page 5*

- **National Health Disparities Elimination Summit**
  CICATS will host a national summit on health disparities this June with events occurring on the UConn Health campus and downtown Hartford. Save the dates: June 12 & 13, 2015. — *Page 6*

*Also Included:* The MLK Jr. / Albert Owens Scholarship Breakfast & Upcoming Events & CICATS Kudos
As a participant in the new CICATS Young Innovative Investigator Program (YIIP), La Shondra Ellis is blazing a new path to a career in the biomedical sciences. “I’ve had to be very disciplined when it comes to balancing courses, mentorship, lab responsibilities, and my personal life; but, it has been a great lesson on managing time,” said Ms. Ellis. This discipline and her work in the program have led to a number of achievements. Ms. Ellis has had an abstract of her lab’s research progress published in Endocrine Reviews, will travel to the 2015 Endocrine Society Annual Meeting in San Diego, CA to present in the Presidential Poster Competition and has received the Endocrine Society’s Summer Research Fellowship Award to participate in research projects under the guidance of a Society member for 10 to 12 weeks during the summer.

Ms. Ellis participates in research within the Center for Molecular Medicine under the direction and mentorship of Dr. Andrew Arnold. The YIIP program also matches each scholar with a UConn mentor who has received the CICATS M1 Mentoring Award. Ms. Ellis receives her M1 mentorship from Dr. Elaine Chuong-Hee Lee, Assistant Professor in UConn’s Department of Kinesiology. As challenging as the program can be, Ms. Ellis has found the YIIP mentor component to be an important resource and source of encouragement. “I appreciate the mentorship, which I feel is crafting me into a better scientist and student. The career building seminars and hands on mentorship are creative means of achieving excellence in my field of study,” Ms. Ellis said.

As for what her future holds, Ms. Ellis said she is interested in becoming a physician with a specialty in oncology and continuing to pursue her interest in research. “I am excited about my future especially as the YIIP program has been actively challenging and thoroughly preparing me to achieve my goals. Every day I walk into the UConn Health campus with a smile on my face. I am extremely grateful to receive an opportunity to be placed in a program that is unequalled by any other program in the United States. The YIIP program allows me to learn something new each day whether it is from the world of science or about myself,” Ms. Ellis said.

Under the leadership of Dr. Linda Barry, COO and Assistant Director of CICATS, the YIIP program was created to recruit under-represented minority students to participate in a novel research based curriculum. The program provides each participant the opportunity to perform basic scientific research in a UConn Health lab with direction from an assigned UConn Principal Investigator.

Each scholar will achieve a Graduate Certificate of Research Experience in Biomedical Science in year one of the program, return to obtain the degree of Master of Biomedical Science (MBS) in the second year, and then continue to further pursue their education goals of attaining a M.D., M.D-Ph.D. or Ph.D.

For additional information, please contact Lana Angelo, CICATS Administrative Program Coordinator.
On March 6, 2015, UConn Health hosted the 2nd Women in Surgery Lectureship with guest lecturer Andrea Hayes-Jordan, M.D., Director of Pediatric Surgical Oncology and Associate Professor of Surgical Oncology and Pediatrics at UT MD Anderson Cancer Center. The lectureship, sponsored by CICATS and UConn Health’s Department of Surgery, was moderated by CICATS COO and Assistant Director, Linda Barry, M.D., FACS.

Dr. Hayes-Jordan is the first and only surgeon in North America to perform hyperthermic peritoneal perfusion with chemotherapy (HIPEC), a heated chemotherapy procedure for the treatment of children with rare abdominal cancers. In addition, she is the principle investigator for three phase 1 and one phase 2 investigator initiated trials and leads a basic science laboratory that studies lung metastasis and sarcomas.

Dr. Hayes-Jordan began the day presenting her lectureship to a crowd of interested students and faculty in the Keller auditorium. The focus of her presentation was her pioneering surgical and academic experience in performing the HIPEC procedure. Through rigorous analysis of HIPEC data, Dr. Hayes-Jordan has been able to refine and improve the procedure and identify patients best suited to benefit from it. Following her lectureship, Dr. Hayes-Jordan provided case presentations, including an in depth analysis of some of her specific patients’ diagnosis and treatment.

“I think it was excellent. Dr. Hayes-Jordan represented a path for minorities in surgery as a woman and African-American. For me specifically, there couldn’t have been a better presentation because I am very interested in pediatrics and oncology and I hope to someday combine those two interests,” said CICATS’ Young Innovative Investigator Program scholar, Nilse Dos Santos.

The Women In Surgery Interest Group luncheon provided a unique opportunity for twenty of the Medical and Graduate school students to discuss their interests, future career paths and academic track with Dr. Hayes-Jordan. Elizabeth Santone, MD Candidate, UConn Class of 2017, said the highlight of the lectureship was hearing about Dr. Hayes-Jordan’s journey through medical school, residency, and her first job. “She was honest about her history and used her own experiences to give unique advice,” said Ms. Santone. Matthew Anderson, MD Candidate, UConn Class of 2016, added that Dr. Hayes-Jordan emphasized the importance of having supportive mentors that are able to help you navigate your career. “Dr. Hayes-Jordan explained it’s more than just knowing the information, it’s also about knowing who can help you to get to the next level of your career. Having a mentor that will advocate for you to get the challenging cases or the mentor that will call program directors advocating for a position in their residency is very important to upward mobility within your career,” said Mr. Anderson.

CICATS thanks Dr. Hayes-Jordan for giving so much of her time to inform, educate and inspire the faculty and student body. We look forward to following the future of her research and career.
Core Interest Groups (CIGs) were developed to promote collaborative, trans-disciplinary research. CIGs build on areas where the University has a strong research presence and capacity for collaborative research development, and also areas with great promise for innovative, new translational research. The eHealth/mHealth Core Interest Group (CIG) led by Linda Barry, M.D., FACS, COO and Assistant Director of CICATS and Deborah H. Cornman, Ph.D., Associate Director of Center for Health, Intervention, and Prevention was established in 2014.

The eHealth/mHealth CIG has 94 members from across UConn as well as from other universities, healthcare facilities, and community-based organizations. It was established to focused on understanding the role and effectiveness of integrating mobile and digital technology in the translation of scientific discoveries to improve patient care, individual health and community health.

Regarding the future role of mobile technology in translational science Dr. Barry said, “the digital approach to health care delivery is the future of medicine. Electronic health records and mobile technology provide the unique opportunity to address health disparities through patient engagement and patient empowerment.”

The electronic revolution in health and healthcare is one of the primary reasons that research through the work of the eHealth/mHealth CIG membership is so important. Dr. Cornman summarized as such, “it is incumbent on researchers to assess what is working and not working. With tens of thousands of health apps available, how many are actually effective at supporting healthy behavior? How will patients, providers, and healthcare systems make sense of the massive amounts of data being generated on a daily basis through mobile technology?”

On Tuesday, March 31, 2015, CICATS will be sponsoring the eHealth/mHealth Core Interest Group’s Digital Health Science Café. Join researchers, scientists, practitioners and members of the community in a lively informal discussion of the role of technology in health and health care. Please RSVP to Deborah Cornman.

Digital Health Science Café
Tuesday, March 31, 2015
4:30 PM - 7:00 PM
at Costa Del Sol Restaurant
901 Wethersfield Ave., Hartford, CT 06114

To further the growth of collaborative partnerships and bring discussions of science and research into the community, CICATS is proud to sponsor the Core Interest Group Science Cafés. For more information on Core Interest Groups and upcoming Science Cafés, please visit our website or contact Lana Angelo, CICATS Administrative Program Coordinator.
CICATS is excited to announce the formation of its new resource for researchers and the academic community, the CICATS Innovation Studio. An “Innovation Studio” consists of a series of dynamic sessions bringing together relevant research experts to provide guidance and consultation to CICATS investigators in the field of translational research. The purposes of the Innovation Studio are for hypothesis generation, study design, implementation, analysis and interpretation as well as manuscript and research proposal development.

A second part of the CICATS Innovation Studio is “Technology Translation.” Technology Translation provides a guidance and consultation session to help investigators explore the possibilities of applying their research findings to the unmet clinical needs and identify opportunities for dissemination of relevant findings into practice or entrepreneurial ventures. The Technology Translation at CICATS Innovation Studio will provide assistance in:

- Identifying appropriate context for disseminating research findings
- Recommending additional tests in order to successfully introduce research findings into real-world settings
- Examining unmet clinical needs pertaining to the findings of the project
- Connecting the investigators with local funding agencies such as Connecticut Innovations
- Recommending an approach for translation of study findings and commercializing innovations

The CICATS Innovation Studio will be led by: Yifrah Kaminer, M.D., M.B.A., Professor of Psychiatry at UConn Health, Carolyn Hoban, D.Sc., Vice President for Research at Hartford Hospital, and David Nicolau, PharmD, FCCP, FIDSA, Director, Center for Anti-Infective Research and Development at Hartford Hospital.

Together the combined experience and specialties of this leadership team will be instrumental in designing a resource that facilitates the advancement of translational research and the realization of commercialized innovations.

For more information on the CICATS Innovation Studio please contact:

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SAVE THE DATE: June 12-13, 2015 | Farmington and Hartford, CT

This summit will be the first of its kind, focusing on drawing a national audience to come together to learn about the current state of health disparities in the United States. This forum will be sponsored by the Connecticut Legislative Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, the W. Montague Cobb/NMA Health Institute and the Connecticut Institute for Clinical and Translational Science.

Many nationally renowned speakers noted for their work in health disparities will be participating. The summit will be held on UConn Health’s campus and at the Hartford Marriott. Several UConn faculty and local community leaders are included in the program.

The goals of the UConn National Health Disparities Elimination Summit are to:

- Advance the understanding about health disparities among racial and ethnic communities which is a major public health problem in our country.
- Promote the exchange of innovative, thought-provoking ideas and information between professionals from the community, academia, industry, and government.
- Develop national and local plans with recommended solutions for the elimination of health disparities.

YOU ARE INVITED!
On the morning of January 19, 2015, Connecticut Institute for Clinical and Translational Science Director, Dr. Cato Laurencin, attended and served as the keynote speaker for the 30th annual Martin Luther King Jr. / Albert Owens Scholarship Breakfast at Lincoln Middle School in Meriden, CT. Dr. Laurencin acknowledged the great work and progress made from the dawn of the civil right movement to the present day. In citing the disproportionate incarceration rates of black men and the prevalence of significant health disparities affecting black children, women and men, Dr. Laurencin emphasized that work needs to continue to achieve the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

For thirty years, the Martin Luther King Jr. / Albert Owens Scholarship Fund has honored the memory of national civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; and Meriden’s own Albert Owens, a civic and union leader, who served as the city’s first human-rights director. Each year the breakfast serves as a fundraiser to raise funds for scholarships awarded to local college bound students. To date, approximately $115,000 has helped local students achieve their dream of a college degree.

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhuman.”
– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Meriden resident, Rhudean S. Raye, founded and has run the Martin Luther King Jr. / Albert Owens Scholarship Breakfast for the entirety of its existence. Ms. Raye attended college at the Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina, received her nurse’s training at Coney Island Hospital in Brooklyn, New York, and came to Meriden in the 1950s. She was one of Meriden’s first black teachers, teaching first and second grade at Nathan Hale School for thirty-two years. She was also the first black nurse to work at the Masonic Geriatric Health Care Center in Wallingford.
Upcoming Events

MARCH 31ST DIGITAL HEALTH SCIENCE CAFE:
The Role of Electronic and Mobile Technology in Healthcare

Join researchers, scientists, practitioners and members of the community in a lively informal discussion of the role of technology in health and healthcare.

4:30 - 7:00 PM at Costa Del Sol Restaurant
901 Wethersfield Ave., Hartford, CT

Food and beverages will be provided. To RSVP or for more information please contact Deborah Cornman, deborah.cornman@chip.uconn.edu.

APRIL 10TH CORRECTIONAL HEALTH SCIENCE CAFE:
Research in an Era of Mass Incarceration

The Correctional Health Core Interest Group aims to highlight opportunities for cross-disciplinary correctional health research and familiarize participants with the CT DOC research health system.

5:00 - 7:00 PM in Storrs Hall, University of Connecticut
231 Glenbrook Road, Unit 2026, Storrs CT

Food and beverages will be provided. To RSVP or for more information please contact Deborah Shelton, deborah.shelton@uconn.edu.

CICATS KUDOS

Here we celebrate the good and the great; the accomplishments and the achievements of those who advance our fields.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Stormy Chamberlain, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Genetics and Genome Sciences, honored by the Connecticut Technology Council as a 2015 Woman of Innovation® inductee.

Cato T. Laurencin, University Professor and Chief Executive Officer of CICATS, who received the NIH Director's Pioneer Award.

Pramod Srivastava, M.D., Ph.D., Director of the Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center, whose research for personalized ovarian cancer vaccines is featured in the April edition of Oprah Winfrey's 'O' magazine.

Keep In Touch

Please let us know what events are happening within and around our fields so that we may help share them here and online and don’t forget to share the achievements of your institutions and partners for possible inclusion in our Kudos section. Any suggestions or inquiries regarding this newsletter may be directed to Luke Bacewicz.