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Pacific Visitors

Three members of Japan's Kanagawa Prefectural Assembly, and a colleague from the Prefectural Government, visited Maryland March 27-30. A prefecture is equivalent to a state in Japan. The legislators were on a fact finding mission to support a newly announced ten year plan by Governor Shigefumi Matsuzawa to restructure an existing cancer research institute. The delegation had meetings with private and public sector representatives in Annapolis, Baltimore and Montgomery County and included a visit to the Medical Biotechnology Center.

After a welcome by UMBI Vice President for Academic Affairs Marian Jackson, MBC Director W. Jonathan Lederer spoke about the organization of MBC and how it functions. Lastly, Dr. Shengyun Fang spoke about the cancer research currently going on at the MBC. Dr. Fang is head of MBC's Program in Cancer Biology.

The meeting was unique because everything had to be translated either to or from Japanese. The group brought their own translator with them. No one really slowed down their delivery to accommodate the process, just stopped periodically to allow the translation to be given. The translator would frantically make notes as someone was speaking and then systematically translate the notes. The process was the same whether it was English to Japanese or vice versa. This did slow the presentations down somewhat but the legislators also asked a great many questions about all aspects of research and its application to health care.

Japan is divided up into 47 prefectures. The Kanagawa prefecture is in east central part of the island of Honshu, the largest island in the Japanese archipelago, and Yokohama is its capital. Other important cities include Kawasaki, Yokosuka, and Kamakura (a religious center). One of the reasons that the delegation came to Maryland was the fact that Kawasaki is one of Baltimore's sister cities. The prefecture also has a large urban area which merges with Tokyo to the north, similar to the extended metropolitan area here.



Top: Dr. W. Jonathan Lederer talking to the delegation.

Center: The lapel pin worn by the delegation and given to the meeting participants.

Bottom: Left to right: Mr. Norihiko Fukuda, UMBI VP Dr. Marian Jackson, Dr. Lederer, Tim Hughes, Mr. Takeo Saito, Dr. Shengyun Fang, Mr. Kei Ando-Delegation leader, and Mr. Kazuyuki Furukawa-Assistant Chief to Kanagawa Prefectural Government



UMBI Anniversary
Education Event

UMBI Anniversary
Highlighted

The twentieth anniversary celebrations continued with a symposium on bioscience education in Maryland, entitled "Enriching K-12 Science Education Through Partnering and Innovation," held on March 31, 2006. UMBI's involvement in education at all levels is one of its least known but most significant contributions to biotechnology in Maryland.

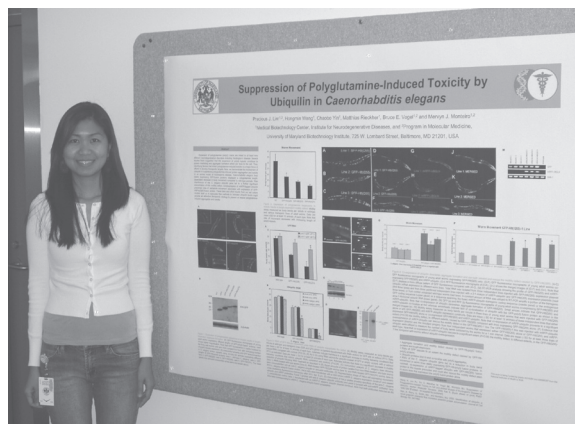
UMBI's twentieth anniversary was highlighted in March in *Maryland Bioscience 2006*, a special supplement of *The Gazette of Politics and Business*. The *Gazette* is a group of community papers for Southern Maryland. UMBI is now regularly thought of whenever biotechnology and bioscience is discussed in Maryland, a tribute to everyone's hard work at making the public aware of the quality and important research done at our institution.

MBC Student Garner First Place

Precious J. Lim, a third-year Ph.D. candidate in the Program in Molecular Medicine, University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB) working in Dr. Mervyn Monteiro's laboratory in the Institute of Neurodegenerative Diseases at the Medical Biotechnology Center (MBC), placed first in poster presentations in the Molecular Biology and Neuroscience Division at the 28th Graduate Research Conference held on April 28, 2006 at University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC). Ms. Lim's poster, with co-workers Dr. Hongmin Wang, Chaobo Yin, Matthias Rieckner, Dr. Bruce Vogel and Dr. Monteiro, entitled "Suppression of Polyglutamine-induced Toxicity by Ubiquilin in *Caenorhabditis elegans*," is part of the laboratory's efforts to understand the role ubiquilin plays in moderating Huntington's disease. Ubiquilin was discovered by Dr. Monteiro's laboratory and may yield new therapeutic strategies against Huntington's disease (See *Inside MBC* Vol. 9, No. 1).

Ms. Lim, a native of the Philippines, says both she and her parents are happy and honored to win this award, which comes with a gift certificate. The Graduate Research Conference is a joint effort by the Graduate Student Associations of UMB and UMBC. Students mentored by MBC faculty are encouraged to submit their work and attend as part of their training.

Dr. Monteiro notes, "Precious is one of those rare students who
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Ms. Lim in front of her award winning poster, now on display on the third floor of the UMBI MRF building.

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Congratulations!

The last issue of *Inside MBC* should have noted **Dr. Kadir Aslan's** promotion to Assistant Professor and Associate Head of MBC's Institute of Fluorescence. Dr. Aslan has been with the MBC for 3 very productive years. The Institute of Fluorescence is headed by Dr. Chris Geddes.

High Schooler Recognized

Rushi Talati, a high school student mentored by Dr. W. Jonathan Lederer (*Inside MBC*, Vol. 8 No. 3), won first place in his division (Biological Sciences II-Medicine and Health) at the Maryland Junior Science and Humanities Symposium for his powerpoint presentation, "De-differentiation of rat cardiomyocytes in culture," held March 9-10. Only 15 students from around the state were invited to give presentations, with another 15 asked to present posters. The category winners became finalists and competed for the opportunity to represent Maryland at the National Symposium in New Mexico.

Though Rushi was not chosen to go on, being selected and becoming a finalist is still an quite an honor. His mentor, Dr. Lederer, was not surprised at Rushi's success, "He is an amazing young man with tremendous potential in science. It is truly a pleasure to work with him."

Since Rushi is just finishing his junior year in high school, he will have another opportunity to compete in the symposium.

Who's Who at the MBC

Editor's Note: This is the first of an irregular series about MBC staffers.

The Medical Biotechnology Center does not run on data alone. It takes several staff members who have never been at a lab bench to see that the non-science work gets done. Most of this work is the responsibility of MBC's business office which is headed by Jami Kasco. Jami is MBC's Business Manager. It is she and her staff, that handle all the money management, including accounts payable and receivable, and human resources that MBC needs to have done.

Jami has been in the University System since 1995, starting in Accounts Payable at UMB. She moved to the IHV as an Accounting Associate in 1997, which was still part of MBC at that time. When the IHV split from the MBC, Jami stayed with the MBC. She was promoted to Business Manager in 1999 by Dr. W. Jonathan Lederer, who was the Interim Director at that time. She is currently working on her bachelor's degree in business at the University of Baltimore. Jami is married to a D.C. policeman and has two children, Alexis, 6 and Noah, 4.



The MBC business office is responsible for anything and everything that has to do with money and Jami has to know how to do it all. While she supervises two staff members, Accounting Associate Mary Graham and Human Resources Specialist Dannielle Watkins, it was she who initially trained them and backs them up when they are gone. In addition, she provides all the analysis for regular reports and any special analyses needed by UMBI Central, MBC or the faculty.

When asked what she liked best working at the MBC, Jami said, "I especially like the flexibility and the people. It is a small group so you get to know everyone and it's really friendly. But mostly I like working with numbers. I really like working with numbers."

Jami is much appreciated at the MBC and UMBI. In 2002, UMBI nominated her for the University System of Maryland Board of Regents Staff Award for Exceptional Contributions to the Institution. Each division within an institution can put forth a staff member to be considered for nomination, but the institution can only send one nomination to the Board. So her contributions have been recognized both here and at UMBI Central.

With the number of faculty members and research grants growing each year, the MBC business office is ever busier. Jami and her staff have ably met the challenge and will no doubt continue to do so.

MBC Happenings

Comings and Goings

Drs. Michael Previte and Xongxia Zhang have joined Dr. Chris Geddes' laboratory as Research Associates. **Geetika Bector**, laboratory assistant, has left Dr. Geddes' laboratory. **Brandie Rocci** is a new Research Assistant in Dr. Mervyn Monteiro's laboratory. Research Associate **Dr. Vera Novitskaia** is no longer with Dr. Ilia Baskakov.

Grants and Contracts

Christopher Geddes, UMB - The Middle-Atlantic Regional Center of Excellence for Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Diseases Research (MARCE), "Anthrax Detection in Clinical Samples in 30 Seconds," 3/1/06, \$148,500, yr 1 of 2.

Hali Hartmann, Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc., "In Vitro Models for the Assessment of DNA Vaccine Uptake Efficiency," 4/1/06, \$100,000, year 1 of 1.

W. Jonathan Lederer, UMB NIH Subcontract, "Strain Controlled LVADE Unloading & PostMI Remodeling," 4/1/06, \$148,500, yr 1 of 5.

Christopher Geddes, Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc., "Metal-Enhanced Fluorescence Anthrax Toxin Detection," 4/1/06, \$45,000, yr 1 of 1.

Bruce Vogel, NIH, "The Molecular Genetics of Hemicentin," 4/1/06, \$243,617, yr 5 of 5.

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Talks and Travels

Dr. Ilia Baskakov, Invited Speaker, "Synthetic Mammalian Prions: Assembly and Substructure," Cambridge Healthtech Institute's 10th Annual Conference on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies, Baltimore, MD, March 8, 2006.

Student continued

combines both intellectual curiosity and hard work with an easy going personality that makes her an asset both scientifically and socially for the lab. She is a real pleasure to work with."

"Dr. Monteiro is a great mentor. His lab is both friendly and productive, which I appreciate very much," says Ms. Lim, who plans to continue doing research on human diseases after she graduates.

The Medical Biotechnology Center's faculty members are currently mentoring seven graduate students from various programs at UMB.