From the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of the Miami VA Research & Development Newsletter. The goal of the newsletter is to increase communication among the research faculty and staff and to increase our awareness of the considerable accomplishments of members of our service. Contributions of news, events, publications, workshops, and career information to the newsletter are always welcome. Since it is the first issue, there is scope to improve its content after receiving comments and suggestions from you the readers. I look forward to your feedback.

Research Week 2008

As part of the 2008 National VA Research Week, the Miami VA Research Service hosted the Miami VA Research Awareness Day Poster Presentation. The organization process for this year’s program was challenging and began with a general invitation to the event and a call for abstracts to all VA research investigators. The feedback was very positive. Over 50 abstracts were submitted. The evaluation form was created using a 1 to 5 grading scale. Each abstract was anonymously sent to three appropriate judges who graded the abstracts. The judging forms were returned electronically and the results were calculated. Four top winners were selected and 13 awards for honorable mention were given.

The program took place on May 13, 2008 from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm in the TC Doherty Auditorium. The abstracts were compiled in Abstract Books, which were printed and distributed to all presenters and attendees. Several research coordinators publicized their current clinical studies and provided brochures and other educational material. As a special keepsake for the Miami VA Research Awareness Day, a pewter lapel pin in the shape of a microscope was given to everyone who attended the event.

The program commenced with opening remarks from Dr. Robert M. Jackson, ACOS for Research. Dr. P. Gwendolyn Findley, Assistant Director, summarized historical accomplishments made by the Office of Research and Development, summarized historical accomplishments made by the Office of Research and Development, continued on Page 3

In the News

Andrew V. Schally, PhD of the Miami VA Healthcare System and Miller School of Medicine, received a Meritorious Service Award from VA for his work on innovative cancer treatments. Winner of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1977, Dr. Schally discovered and synthesized three hormones—all peptides, or chains of amino acids—produced in the hypothalamus region of the brain. The discoveries had a significant impact on reproductive medicine, among other areas, leading to the development of fertility and contraceptive compounds. More recently, his research has focused on the development of “smart” chemotherapy that targets tumors but leaves surrounding tissues unharmed. The approach involves combining cancer drugs with synthetic versions of hormones and then targeting tumors that have receptors for those hormones.
Research Highlights

Carlton S. Gass, PhD is the Director of the Neuropsychology Clinic at the Miami VAHCS. He is engaged in applied clinical research aimed at improving the clinical assessment of veterans with known or suspected brain injury, as well as veterans with emotional difficulties such as PTSD. Dr. Gass is the Principle Investigators on the following current VA projects:

A Component Analysis of the Trail Making Test (co-author: Dr. Esther Misriadi) and Impact of Depression on Auditory Memory Storage and Retrieval (co-author: Alison Dowd, M.S.)

Dr. Gass is also a consulting editor for the Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology, (the official journal of the National Academy of Neuropsychology) and a frequent reviewer for the journal Psychological Assessment.

The adrenal research group of Dr. Lawrence M. Fishman and Dr. John W. Brown within the Miami VAHCS (including former UM/VA Endocrinology fellows Drs. Maribel Montoya and Luz Prieto) recently published three journal articles in Hormone & Metabolic Research describing their findings on the comparative effects of established and experimental cancer chemotherapy agents, steroid hormones and derivatives on cell-cycle alterations, as well as on growth and apoptosis in the SW-13 human adrenal cortical carcinoma cell-line. Dr. Carlos Perez-Stable (Miami VA/GRECC) was an important contributor and co-author in these studies. Among other findings, their work showed that low dose 2-methoxy-estradiol (10⁻⁷ M) and high dose progesterone (10⁻⁵ M) treatment both have strong growth-inhibitory effects which involve a G2/M blockade, as well as the induction of apoptosis. They have also demonstrated high dose 17β-estradiol induced apoptosis. The results of estrogen analog studies indicate that this effect is probably mediated by the β receptor.

The Functional Outcomes Research and Evaluation (FORE) center is dedicated toward amputee rehabilitation and minimizing the risk of secondary complications associated with an amputation. FORE developed an innovative tool called Symmetry in External mechanical Work (SEW), that would help physical therapists, physicians and prosthetists determine the “quality” of everyday activities, such as walking, going up and down stairs and ramps, turning, sitting down and standing up from a chair. One of the investigators, Vibhor Agrawal, was awarded the first prize in recognition of this new measure. The other researchers involved with the development of the SEW tool include Robert Gailey, Ignacio Gaunaurd and Christopher O’Toole. The FORE center has received external funding to advance knowledge about this new measure as well as to evaluate the cutting edge bionic prosthetic technology. Ron Tolchin, chief of physical medicine and rehabilitation, has been named as the principal investigator for this research project.

This group is now pursuing collaborative studies with Dr. Andrew V. Schally, Director of the VA Endocrine, Polypeptide & Cancer Research Institute and Dr. Lisa Young (UM/VA Endocrinology fellow) investigating hypothalamic neuropeptide analog effects on the growth and survival of human adrenal carcinoma cell-lines in culture. Dr. Andrea Treszl from Dr. Schally’s laboratory was a key participant in experiments demonstrating receptor and/or receptor variant expression of neupeptide analogs for somatostatin, LHRH, GHRH and Bombesin/GRP in these cells. Dr. Brown was invited to present the adrenal carcinoma data at the INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON ENDOCRINE-RELATED TUMORS at the University of Dresden (GERMANY). Dr. Schally gave the keynote lecture on neuropeptide analog effects in other cancers at the same conference. Preliminary findings of their collaborative research in adrenal cortical carcinoma was also presented and published in three posters at the 2008 Endocrine Society Meeting in San Francisco, CA.

The SFVAFRE is negotiating local CRADAs with Forest Research Institute and IDEALLIFE.

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If you have any questions or would like copies of the CRADA models, please contact our office at (305) 575-7000 ext. 3722.

WWW.SFVAFRE.org is getting an extreme make-over. Please stay tuned.
### Research Week 2008 from Page 1

Dr. Jackson highlighted the work of several leading Miami VA investigators. He concluded with the announcement of the winners and distribution of awards.

The program was well attended by hospital staff and patients currently participating in relevant clinical studies. Interested faculty and researchers from the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine also attended. Dr. Audrey Kalachu, Scientific Program Manager, Rehabilitation Research and Development, Washington D.C. was an invited guest.

The interaction between the presenters and attendees was a key factor in achieving our goal of promoting collegiality.

We received positive feedback from investigators who stated they were not aware of the superb quality of research being conducted in other areas within the Miami VA Healthcare System. The poster presentation sparked new research interest for future collaborations among Miami VA investigators.

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### Upcoming Events

**August 7-8, 2008 AARHPP Site Visit**

*Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs*

Preparations for the AARHPP site visit have been underway for several months. This is a time and person intensive process, involving detailed assessment, evaluation, and fine-tuning of our entire research program. The results of our application for accreditation and site visit will be determined in early December.

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### Informational Workshop

**Friday, October 17, 2008**

8:30 am to 4:30 pm

**Institutional Review Board 250**

Speakers for IRB 250

Drs. Jeffrey Cohen

Ernest Prentice.

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### IMPORTANT Training Required

**DEADLINE FOR COMPLETION: 8-31-08**

You must be able to view all graphics to complete the course. If you have trouble viewing the graphics on your VA Computer, call IRMS help desk at x 3201.

For more guidance on course completion, please contact Katrina Washburn, PhD in the Main Research Office at extension 3431.

A new course has been developed for Information Security Training entitled "Information Security 201 for Research & Development Personnel." There is a one time requirement to complete this course for existing personnel in the capacity listed below; new hires must complete upon employment.

*Information Security 201 for Research & Development Personnel:* All VA Research Office personnel, investigators, study coordinators, research assistants, trainees involved in human subjects research projects, administrative support staff (including secretaries and clerks), and members of the IRB and Research & Development Committee. Personnel includes compensated and without compensation (WOC) employees, and IPAs.

If a non-employee VA staff member (WOC or IPA) is required to take this training, he/she currently must access it through VA LMS. The local VA LMS Administrator will need to manually create a VA LMS account for the individual. If you fall in this category, please contact Mr. Luis Gonzalez, AO for Research, at 305-575-3179.
Andrew Schally, PhD, ScD, MDHC
Head of the Endocrine, Polypeptide and Cancer Institute was one of eight great scientists who were invited to attend the BIT’s Annual World Cancer Congress held in Shanghai, China on June 12-17, 2008.

Dr. Schally’s Keynote Address was entitled “Antagonists of Growth Hormone Releasing Hormone (GHRH) in Cancer Therapy”. Dr. Schally gave 3 other lectures in Shanghai on anticancer compounds and received an honorary professorship of Tonji University.
Recent Publications (Continued)

Endocrine, Polypeptide and Cancer Institute


VAHCS Neuropsychology Clinic


Carlton Gass, Ph.D. (Co-author) "Potential for Bias in MMPI-2 using the Fake Bad Scale" in Psychological Injury and the Law. Note: MMPI-2 (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory) is the most widely used and researched psychological test in the world.

Lung Biology Laboratory


Recent Publications (Continued)

Miami VAHCS Adrenal Research


VAHCS Nephrology-Hypertension Section

UIMMSM Vascular Biology Institute


The importance of this paper is that we demonstrate that "statins" popular agents for treating high cholesterol may have beneficial effects on the kidney that are independent of their effect on cholesterol. In the paper, we demonstrate the mechanisms that may participate in the salutary effects of statins.

Editor

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