

transitions

INSTITUTE OF GERONTOLOGY

Promoting Successful Aging in Detroit and Beyond

Fall 2005

\$2.5 Million Cancer Grant Asks Why Minorities Suffer More

Reflecting an alarming nationwide trend, African Americans are twice as likely to die from cancer as are other Michigan residents. The Institute of Gerontology and Karmanos Cancer Institute are joining forces on a five-year study that will look for answers in the Detroit community.



JUNE CLARK AND PETER LICHTENBERG

"This research will open the door to better healthcare for countless older Detroiters."

Peter Lichtenberg

"This research will open the door to better healthcare for countless older Detroiters," said IOG director Dr. Peter Lichtenberg, who is also co-director of the cancer research grant. "African Americans face cultural obstacles when it comes to preventative healthcare as well as treatment. Identifying these obstacles is half the battle. Removing them is the other."

Early detection means better prognosis

The Karmanos Cancer Institute's Dr. Terrance Albrecht, the study's principal investigator, emphasized the relationship between cancer and aging. "Cancer is primarily a disease associated with aging, and it's imperative that we understand the needs of the elderly minority

population in Detroit." She described the project as "a community-based movement to increase cancer screenings and early detection, diagnosis, and treatment for Detroit's seniors."

The Community Networks Partnership to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities in Older African Americans (CNP) is funded by the National Cancer Institutes as

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research
education
outreach
partnerships

WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Raz Granted \$3 Million to Measure Aging Brain



PETER LICHTENBERG AND NAFTALI RAZ

For 20 years, Dr. Naftali Raz has been studying the course of cognitive aging among healthy adults. With every new project, the central question stays the same: What does “normal” aging look like?

What distinguishes diseases such as Alzheimer’s from the normal changes that occur with time? According to Raz, the evidence isn’t in. Memory and the ability to learn—the heart and soul of cognitive neuroscience—are among the most elusive age-related changes. But this shouldn’t lead us to the wrong conclusions, he warns. “Many symptoms of cardiovascular disease continue to be confused with aging.” We won’t be

takes the science of memory and mental processes to the next level. Three domains—brain structure, blood composition, and cognitive performance—will be tracked for five years in at least 300 adult participants. Neurologist Dr. Brad Jacobs from WSU’s School of Medicine will focus on blood markers that reflect risk levels for stroke and other vascular disease. These markers will be studied together with MRI images and multiple measures of memory and reasoning on three separate occasions. Dr. Ulman Lindenberger from the Max Planck Institute of Human Development and Dr. Paolo Ghisletta from University of Geneva in

“More measurements, participants, and precise statistical methods mean more power to analyze change.”

Naftali Raz

able to discern the real health problems associated with aging until we have a baseline.

As director of the IOG’s Lifespan Cognitive Neuroscience Research Program, Raz makes sure that his lab uses cutting-edge magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) equipment to detect the most subtle structural changes in the brain. Longtime collaborator Dr. E. Mark Haacke, physicist and director of the MRI Institute for Biomedical Research, works with Raz’s team to make their MRI scans almost three times as powerful as typical clinical scans.

The new project, Neural Correlates and Modifiers of Cognitive Aging,

Switzerland will then develop sophisticated statistical models of the observed cerebral and cognitive changes.

All this has a dramatic impact, explained Raz, on the study’s strength and refinement. “More measurements, participants, and precise statistical methods mean more power to analyze change.” This large, complex, and longitudinal study builds on our ability to track changes in brain structure, health, and cognition over time. It promises profound new knowledge of aging and lifelong health.

research

Faculty Highlights



FROM LEFT: TOM JANKOWSKI, WSU VP FOR RESEARCH JOHN OLIVER, BOARD OF VISITORS MEMBER PATRICK SMITH, AND FORMER DETROIT FREE PRESS PUBLISHER NEIL SHINE



OLIVIA WASHINGTON AND MARK LUBORSKY



IRVIN REID AND SHERYLYN BRILLER



ANDREA NEVEDAL AND CATHY LYSACK

IOG

Veteran IOG faculty member Dr. Tom Jankowski has been promoted to Associate Director for Research at the IOG. Jankowski will use his new role to optimize the grant funding process, strategizing and streamlining the journey from research opportunity to grant-writing to project management. Within the IOG, he will continue to assist faculty, pre-doctoral trainees, and postdoctoral fellows with his expertise in survey research, research methodology, statistical analysis, data management, and academic computing.

WSU

This spring, Wayne State University hosted an academic recognition ceremony at which several IOG faculty were honored. Dr. Olivia Washington, left, received a Career Development Chair Award. This coveted award relieves Washington of teaching duties for one full year, enabling her to focus on her research with older, African American women who have become homeless.

Dr. Mark Luborsky, right, received an Outstanding Graduate Mentor Award for his work with IOG pre-doctoral trainees and post-doctoral fellows. Luborsky's research collaboration with the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm inspired the IOG to adopt a similarly intensive mentoring model across its training programs.

IOG faculty fellow Dr. Sherylyn Briller, pictured with President Irvin Reid, received the President's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Briller is a key member of the IOG's training faculty, serving as primary mentor to pre-doctoral trainees Holli Barke-Baker, Lindsey Martin, and Andrea Nevedal.

NATIONAL

Dr. Cathy Lysack received a Best Oral Paper Award for her presentation, "The Impact of Environmental Factors on Perceived Community Integration and Sense of Community Belonging after SCI," at the American Spinal Cord Injury Association's annual meeting. She is pictured, right, at the Art of Aging Successfully conference with pre-doctoral trainee Andrea Nevedal.

IOG director Dr. Peter Lichtenberg was elected to chair the Behavioral and Social Sciences Section of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA). This position presents a tremendous leadership opportunity in the largest professional organization dedicated to aging research and education. The GSA annual conference provides a major forum for IOG faculty, trainees, and postdoctoral fellows to share their research and keep abreast of developments in their field.

research

Trainee Highlights

The IOG's NIH Predoctoral Training Program in Aging and Urban Health nurtures rising stars in lifespan health research.

Going global: cognitive neuroscience trainees recognized at home and abroad

Kristen Kennedy and Karen Rodrigue are among the most exceptional doctoral candidates ever to participate in the IOG Training Program in Aging and Urban Health. Talented students, dedicated researchers, prolific authors, and community-minded professionals, they can usually be found in the Cognitive Neuroscience of Aging lab, hard at work with their mentor, Dr. Naftali Raz. Though they keep a low profile on the home front, their work has captured international attention.

The academic year started out well for Kennedy, who won WSU's most prestigious award, the Thomas C. Rumble Graduate Fellowship. She was subsequently awarded the WSU Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

The IOG applauded Rodrigue when she published "Shrinkage of the Entorhinal Cortex over Five Years Predicts Memory Performance in Health Adults" in the prestigious *Journal of Neuroscience*. Her article proceeded to win first place in the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan's 2005 Excellence in Research Award for Students.

In appreciation of their contributions, Oakland County's Senior Coordinating Aging Network awarded Rodrigue and Kennedy cash scholarships. Later this summer, they participated in the Schloessmann Seminar in Developmental Psychology in Berlin, where they were given a Predoctoral Scientist Award for their presentation.

Most recently, their work won awards from the Adult Development and Aging division of the American Psychological Association. Despite their unrelenting schedules, Rodrigue and Kennedy show no signs of slowing down.

Uncovering connections between gender, race, and health

Dr. Waverly Duck has had an exciting year since graduating from the IOG Training Program in 2004. Now an assistant professor of sociology at Community College of Philadelphia, Duck was awarded a Lindback Foundation Minority Junior Faculty Grant to continue his research on the relationship between masculinity and health in African American men. He has also been appointed Visiting Scholar at University of Pennsylvania for the 2005-2006 academic year.



WAVERLY DUCK



KAREN RODRIGUE AND KRISTEN KENNEDY

Successful Aging: Science or Art?

A long life may be a wished-for part of a good life, but years tell only part of the story. People tell the rest.

This spring, 250 successful Michigan seniors came together to share their stories and show their work. The Sixth Annual Art of Aging Successfully conference drew 75 creative expression submissions in the fields of hobby and craft, music and dance, and memoirs and creative writing. All creative expressions were the work of non-professional artists age 55 and older.

Their works formed the gallery walk at the heart of the conference, which was organized by the IOG's Elder Advisors to Research (EAR). Since 1996, this volunteer group has

*(TOP PHOTO)
PAINTINGS, QUILTS, WOODWORK, AND EMBROIDERY FILLED THE WIDE HALLS OF GREATER GRACE TEMPLE IN DETROIT.*

*(BOTTOM PHOTO)
CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN BERNARD ZAFFERN WITH ELIZABETH CHAPLESKI*



dedicated its efforts to involving older adults in research and education.

Tapping resources

According to retired IOG faculty member Dr. Elizabeth Chapleski, one of the founding members of the EAR, there are no better sources of aging information than older adults themselves. "Research shows that resourceful people tend to age more successfully. The EAR lets older individuals tap their own resources, teach each other, and learn by example."

Break-out sessions let participants explore creative expressions through art, baseball, volunteering...and dancing the hustle. Dr. Jennifer Mendez, director for education at the IOG and EAR co-chair, says that staying active promotes feelings of well being. "Being active is one measure of health," she said, "and an even more important measure of happiness."

Putting talent to work

EAR members have included such notables as the late Marie Guyton, the late Mildred ("Millie") Jeffrey, and the late Dr. Charles Meyers. Guyton, who was a prominent Detroit educator, civic leader, and philanthropist, was a strong supporter of research on aging and believed that the IOG valued the talents and wisdom of older adults. Her legacy at the IOG includes helping to found the EAR as well as endowing the Marie Guyton Aging and Health Faculty Fund.

Jeffrey, who made history as the first woman director of the United Auto Workers, devoted her long social activism career to the causes of women, labor, and education. She was



a longtime friend of the IOG and a WSU Governor Emerita. Meyers, a proud Native American Indian elder (his Michigan license plate read "Indian"), had a long and inspired career as a pharmacologist, historian, linguist, musician, artist, and advocate for culturally relevant research.

Just as the Art of Aging Successfully conference draws a forward-looking crowd, the EAR is a magnet for active and accomplished seniors. This year's event was chaired by Bernard Zaffern. Zaffern is a retired attorney and WWII veteran who spent the 50th anniversary of D-Day as a guest of the Russian government. WSU alumna Gloria Sniderman volunteers at the WSU library where she was a librarian for 25 years. Retired WSU professor of social work Betty Welsh has initiated projects supporting seniors as well as featuring them. She uses every available medium—radio, television, and live audiences—to keep seniors connected. Frank Singer has made a second career in reporting on senior events for a cable TV show, which he also produces and hosts.

Art of Aging Successfully is Detroit's only major educational event that is run entirely by seniors, for seniors. Because of this, said Chapleski, "it offers an opportunity for older individuals to share their collective experience, knowledge and wisdom."

Save the Date!

2005 COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Merrill-Palmer Institute, 71 East Ferry Street
Tuesdays, 9:30-10:30 a.m. (unless otherwise noted)
Colloquia are free and open to students, professionals, and the public.

September 27—HEALTH LITERACY, ONLINE RESOURCES, AND OLDER ADULTS

Roger Morrell, Ph.D., Practical Memory Institute and Johns Hopkins University

October 4—H.I.V. AND AGING

Stewart Neufeld, Ph.D., Institute of Gerontology, WSU

October 14 (Friday)—T.B.A.

Ana Garrigo Trillo, Ph.D., Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Madrid

October 20 (Thursday)—SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN OLDER ADULTS

Brian Carpenter, Ph.D., Washington University

November 1—DESIGN COMPENSATIONS FOR AGE, GENDER, AND READING

Ireta Ekstrom, Ph.D., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

November 15—NEW SUPPORTS IN OLD EUROPE: HEALTHY AGING AND INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Patricia Noonan Walsh, Ph.D., University College, Dublin

December 2 (Friday)—GRANDPARENT CAREGIVING AND HYPERTENSION

Jacquelyn Taylor, Ph.D., University of Michigan

December 6—NEURAL CORRELATES OF AMNESIA / MEMORY AND AGING

Neal Cohen, Ph.D., University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

CONTROVERSIES IN SUCCESSFUL AGING

October 14—Jewish Community Center, Oak Park

ELDER ADVISORS TO RESEARCH LEARNING SERIES AGING SUCCESSFULLY IN RETIREMENT

October 26—4:00-5:15 p.m., American House Oakland, Pontiac

RSVP: Elizabeth Nanas, (313) 577-2297

I/OG POSTER PRESENTATION & RECEPTION

October 27—3:00-5:00 p.m., 87 East Ferry Street, 2nd floor

CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS: DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS

November 1—Non-professional Michigan artists only, age 55+

Creative expressions including art, craft, music, dance, memoir, and poetry will be exhibited at the 7th Annual Art of Aging Successfully Conference – March 29, 2006.
Contact Dr. Jennifer Mendez, (313) 577-2297,
j.mendez@wayne.edu

On the Cover... Mrs. Yona Friedman, 83, stays active by clowning at a local hospital and teaching belly dancing at her senior residential community. "I feel like 38," she said, although "I was 28 until my stroke two years ago."

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GRAPHIC/PAGE DESIGN - BIZON DESIGN
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Cancer Grant *continued from front page*

part of a \$95 million, national grant program supporting community-based projects in geographically and culturally diverse areas of the country.

Leadership roles will be played by June Clark, a member of the IOG research staff and a breast cancer survivor and by IOG faculty member

Melissa Franks, who is also a member of Albrecht's Communication and Behavioral Oncology Program at Karmanos.

According to the American Cancer Society, African Americans have the highest cancer death rate of any racial

or ethnic group. Clark reports that it is common for African Americans to forego cancer screening because they feel it's better not to look for bad news. "People's perceptions can have a profound effect on their reality," said Lichtenberg. "We have to work at changing both."

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