Letter from the Chair

Dear Colleagues,

As in each issue of the Pathology Newsletter, I would like to take the opportunity to highlight (at least) some of the accomplishments of our faculty and trainees during the last few months. Initially, I would like to congratulate Dr. Amy Rapkiewicz, an Associate Professor in our Department, for her new position as the Chair of the NYU Long Island School of Medicine Department of Pathology. Amy trained as a fellow with us, spend a number of years in our faculty, was essential for medical education at NYU Langone and now she will be the one to lead our “sister” Department in Long Island and medical education in the brand new medical school. I would also like to congratulate Dr. Eva Hernando an Associate Professor in our Department, for her new position as the Assistant Dean for Research Integration at NYU Langone Health. Eva was an integral part of our Department’s research expansion as the Vice Chair for Research and will now oversee research integration throughout the NYU Langone System. For me, there is nobody better for this position. Moreover, I would like to congratulate all our faculty and trainees for a successful representation at this year’s USCAP meeting in Los Angeles. Our “delegation”, headed by Dr. Andre Moreira featured eight platform presentations and twelve posters. This is another proof of the impressive creativity and output of our faculty, fellows and residents. We will update you with more details after the conference in June Newsletter.

Also, I would like to congratulate Dr. Richard Possemato for his promotion to the Associate Professor level. Richard is one of the new generation of leaders in the field of tumor metabolism and was the first research faculty that I have recruited to NYU Pathology in 2014. He is not only a gifted researcher but also an impressive educator and colleague. Richard also received recently an R01 grant from the NIH for his studies focused on cancer metabolism. Finally, I would like to welcome Dr. William Coetzee to our Department. Together with Dr. Stefan Feske, William will head the new Ion channel core facility that is supported by our Department.

I would also like to highlight a few research articles coming from our department that I invite you to read further. You can find our entire list of new publications in a dedicated section of the newsletter.

- Dr. Eva Hernando led a research team that published a remarkable work in Cancer Cell on the role of circular RNAs in Melanoma progression. The study provides new insights into melanoma aggressive behavior and proposes a circular RNA as a suppressor of metastasis. This article was highlighted in a recent NYU research press release.
- Dr. Thales Papagiannakopoulos and his team describe an exciting new mechanism through which lung cancer cells become dependent on non-essential amino acids in a study published in Cell Metabolism. Intriguingly, their findings suggest that this dependency can potentially be exploited therapeutically by dietary restriction exogenous non-essential amino acids.
- Dr. Matija Snuderl and colleagues successfully demonstrated that IDH1/2 mutations have different effects on DNA methylation depending on the cancer type. This work was published in Scientific Reports.
- Drs. Shi and Wei teamed with our Pathology clinical faculty and performed a study that propose a new protocol for differentiating thyroid versus parathyroid lesions on cytology specimens. The study was published in Diagnostic Cytopathology.

Our trainees keep working hard and do a terrific job obtaining new research awards, some of which I highlight here:

- Anastasia Tikhonova, PhD, and Christina Glytsou, PhD, both trainees in my lab, were awarded an ASH Scholar Award and an LLS Special Fellow-Grant for their studies on Leukemia.
- Warren Wu, an MD-PhD student in Dr. Papagiannakopoulos' lab received an NIH F30 award for his studies on Lung Adenocarcinoma.

Finally, I would like to take some time to discuss the COVID-19 scare that dominates headlines world-wide. So far, the response of NYU Langone was exemplary, preparing facilities and employees and also taking measures to prevent transmission to all of us as well as to patients and visitors. Our leadership team follows the situation in real time in both research and clinical areas. Please keep in mind that prevention is key and we should all follow simple measures to minimize spreading of the disease. However, I do suggest that each one of you should convene with your team and immediate colleagues and have a plan of response that will keep everybody safe. Our recent history has proven that we can overcome everything so don’t lose your optimism and preparedness.

Happy Spring everybody and I hope that you will enjoy this Newsletter!

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