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About News & Views

News & Views is produced by the staff of the American Academy of Microbiology. We welcome your contributions of short articles, letters, or updates on Fellows in the news.

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Newly Elected to the BOG

Alison O’Brien and Barbara Murray have been elected to serve on the Board of Governors

Dr. Alison O’Brien is Professor and Chair of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, MD. Dr. O’Brien earned her Ph.D. in Medical Microbiology in 1976 from The Ohio State University. She conducted her postdoctoral studies as a National Research Council Research Associate at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research from 1976-80. In 1978, Dr. O’Brien became an Assistant Professor of Microbiology and Immunology at Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences and rose through the ranks to become a full Professor in 1985. In 1996, she became Chair of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology. Current studies in Dr. O’Brien’s laboratory are focused on the role of Shiga toxins in the pathogenesis of hemorrhagic colitis and the hemolytic-uremic syndrome, identification and characterization of the roles of virulence factors in an animal model of enteraggregative E. coli disease, and assessment of the roles of toxins and capsules in the virulence of the anthrax-like B. cereus strain G9241. Dr. O’Brien was the Editor-in-Chief of Infection and Immunity from 1999 to 2007 and was the President of the American Society for Microbiology from 2007 to 2008. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology, of the Infectious Diseases Society of America, and of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She has mentored 22 graduate students and 50 postdoctoral scientists and has published over 200 peer-reviewed manuscripts and book chapters.

Dr. Barbara-Murray is an internationally recognized expert in antibiotic resistance, enterococci, and bacterial pathogenesis, conducts NIH-funded research, and served on a number of NIH committees, DSMBs and study sections, including as past Chair of the NIH Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee, as well as on the FDA’s Anti-Infectives Advisory Committee. She has also served as a consultant to the pharmaceutical industry, to the European Food Safety Authority, and to the EU’s Innovative Medicines Initiative. She has been active in professional societies, including serving as the chair of the Program Planning Committee of the American Society of Microbiology’s ICAAC meeting for 3 years; as an editor of Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy, a journal published by the American Society for Microbiology (10-year term); on the Program Committee of the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID); and as Secretary and/or Treasurer of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (6 years). She is a frequent visiting professor at other medical schools, a frequent invited speaker at national and international meetings and a contributor to UpToDate, Harrison’s Textbook of Internal Medicine, and Mandell’s Principles and Practice of Infectious Diseases.
Newly Elected to the COE

Janet Hindler, James Konopka, Nancy Freitag, and Eugene Koonin have been elected to the Committee on Elections

Janet Fick Hindler, MCLS, MT(ASCP), has worked as a clinical microbiologist for more than 35 years, the last 30 at UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles. She has worked, written, and taught extensively in the area of antimicrobial susceptibility testing and has presented hundreds of talks and workshops to clinical microbiologists and other healthcare practitioners in more than 15 nations. Ms. Hindler has worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and served as a consultant to the World Health Organization; is currently a consultant with the Association of Public Health Laboratories. She is active in the ASM at the national and local levels. Ms. Hindler has received numerous awards for her work in clinical microbiology, including the Sonnenwirth Award, the ASM’s highest honor for service to clinical microbiology. She received her education at Albright College, Duke University, and University of California, San Francisco.

James Konopka is a Professor of Molecular Genetics and Microbiology at Stony Brook University. Dr. Konopka’s research on the mechanisms that regulate cell signaling and morphogenesis has had important impact on diverse areas, including leukemia, G protein-coupled receptors, and fungal morphology. Current studies are aimed at identifying the virulence mechanisms of the human fungal pathogen Candida albicans. One major area of research is to define the roles of the plasma membrane in virulence, as this essential barrier mediates many critical functions and is a target for antifungal drugs. Recent work has focused on the role of plasma membrane subdomains in promoting morphogenesis and resistance to stress. The Konopka lab is also studying the mechanisms by which the sugar N-acetylglucosamine (GlcNAc) induces hyphal morphogenesis and virulence gene expression in C. albicans. These studies are helping to reveal new roles for GlcNAc signaling in fungi and other organisms.

Nancy Freitag is a Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is the Associate Director of the Medical Scientist Training Program and has received several awards for graduate and medical teaching. Her research focuses on the environmental bacterial pathogen Listeria monocytogenes and its capacity to survive in soil while still retaining the complex ability to replicate within the cytosol of mammalian cells. Environmental microbes are numerous, and yet relatively few have the capacity to cause human disease; thus, understanding how these organisms transition into life within mammalian cells could better define strategies exploited by emerging pathogens. Additional studies within the Freitag lab focus on how common anesthetic agents increase host susceptibility to microbial disease, with the ultimate goal of limiting hospital-acquired infections.

Eugene V. Koonin is the Leader of the Evolutionary Genomics Group, and a Senior Investigator at the National Center for Biotechnology Information, NIH. His group seeks to understand the evolution of life. To obtain glimpses of such understanding, they employ existing and new methods of computational biology to perform research in several major areas. Dr. Koonin earned his doctorate from Moscow State University and was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute of Poliomyelitis, Russian Academy of Sciences. He is also Editor-in-Chief of Biology Direct, a Section editor of Trends in Genetics, and an Associate Editor of Genome Biology and Evolution. He serves on the Editorial Boards of Nucleic Acids Research and BMC Biology.
The Academy Welcomes New Fellows

In February, the American Academy of Microbiology elected 73 new Fellows. There are over 2,400 Fellows representing all subspecialties of the microbial sciences and involved in basic and applied research, teaching, public health, industry, and government service. Fellows hail from all around the globe. The “Class of 2017” includes Fellows from the U.S., Germany, Australia, Canada, India, China, and the United Kingdom.

See the full list of all 73 new Fellows here:


Events for Fellows at ASM Microbe 2017

Fellows Lounge Hours

- **Friday, June 2**
  - 7:00 am – 3:00 pm
- **Saturday, June 3**
  - 7:00 am – 4:30 pm
- **Sunday, June 4**
  - 7:00 am – 4:30 pm
- **Monday, June 5**
  - 7:00 am – 2:00 pm

ASM President’s Forum
New Fellows Recognized
Friday, June 2, 2017, 11:00am – 12:30pm

AAM Fellows Recognition Reception
RSVP here
Friday, June 2, 2017, 5:30pm-7:00pm

Diversity Lecture:
Dr. José Víctor García-Martínez
Saturday, June 3, 2017, 3:15pm – 3:45pm

Diversity Lecturer Meet and Greet
Opportunity for trainees
Saturday, June 3, 2017, 5:00pm-6:00pm
Congratulations to the 2017 ASM Award Winners

The Award winners will be recognized at ASM Microbe 2017
To view which Award winners will be giving lectures at the meeting, please visit the online program planner here: http://bit.ly/microbe2017

Service Awards

ASM Lifetime Achievement Award
2017 Winner: Kyung Kwon-Chung, Ph.D.

Hardy Diagnostics ABMM/ABMLI Professional Recognition Award
2017 Winner: Susan Sharp, Ph.D.

Hologic Joseph Public Health Award
2017 Winners: Douglas Lowy, M.D., and John Schiller, Ph.D.

MilliporeSigma Alice C. Evans Award
2017 Winner: Diane Griffin, M.D., Ph.D.

Sonnenwirth Award for Leadership in Clinical Microbiology
2017 Winner: Richard Thomson, Ph.D.

Clinical Research Awards

ASM Award in Clinical and Diagnostic Immunology
2017 Winner: George Carlone, Ph.D.

Award for Research in Clinical Microbiology
2017 Winner: Samir Saha, Ph.D.

Diagnostics Young Investigator Award
2017 Winner: Marc Couturier, Ph.D.

Scherago-Rubin Award
2017 Winner: Michael Brandon, B.S.

Applied Research Awards

DuPont Industrial Biosciences Award in Applied and Environmental Microbiology
2017 Winner: Lonnie Ingram, Ph.D.

Promega Biotechnology Research Award
2017 Winner: Raymond St. Leger, Ph.D.

USFCC/J. Roger Porter Award
2017 Winner: Kyria Boundy-Mills, Ph.D.

Basic Research Awards

Antimicrobial Research Award
2017 Winner: Melanie Cushion, Ph.D.

Eli Lilly and Company-Elanco Research Award
2017 Winner: Harmit Malik, Ph.D.

Merck Irving S. Sigal Memorial Award
2017 Winner: Jesse Bloom, Ph.D.

Raymond W. Sarber Awards
2017 Winners: Natalia Porcek-Hubbs, B.S. (Graduate); Quang Nguyen, B.S. (Undergraduate)

Young Investigator Awards
2017 Winners: Jennifer Gaddy, Ph.D.; Katherine Ralston, Ph.D.; Kristin Parent, Ph.D.

Education Awards

ASM Graduate Microbiology Teaching Award
2017 Winner: Thomas Dela Cruz, Dr. Rer. Nat.

Carski Foundation Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching Award
2017 Winner: Patricia Shields, Ph.D.

D.C. White Research and Mentoring Award
2017 Winner: Stephen Goff, Ph.D.

William A. Hinton Research Training Award
2017 Winner: Steven Finkel, Ph.D.
Nominate Today for the 2018 Awards

The 2018 ASM Awards Nominations are now open. The ASM awards program recognizes excellence in the microbial sciences at all levels of microbiology careers. From undergraduate to lifetime achievement, clinical to environmental microbiology, there is an award to honor outstanding science at every stage of microbiology careers.

The nomination process has been streamlined this year, making it easier than ever to submit nominations. Here’s what you need to know:

1 nomination form: There’s just one nomination form on which you select the award for which you are submitting a nomination to from the drop-down list.

2 references: List two individuals who can serve as references for the nominee. The references must be from a different institution than the nominee. They will not be asked to submit any forms and will be contacted only if the committee requires more information to evaluate the nomination.

22 Awards: Nominate for one (or more!) of the ASM Awards.

All nominations are due June 9, 2017

Committee on Diversity Lecturer at ASM Microbe 2017

Join us at ASM Microbe 2017 for two events with Dr. José Víctor García-Martínez, ASM’s Honorary Diversity Lecturer. Dr. García is a professor of Medicine in the Department of Medicine at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Diversity Lecture celebrates an accomplished microbiologist and exceptional speaker whose heritage is under-represented in the microbial sciences.

Saturday, June 3rd
Humanized Mouse Models for HIV Infection
3:15—3:45 pm
Room 344, Convention Center

Following the lecture, Dr. García will host a meet & greet session for students and post-docs. During this unique session, Dr. García will offer advice to young scientists on:

- How to sustain funding
- How to publish research in top-tier journals
- How budding scientists can benefit from a mentor

Saturday, June 3rd
5:00—6:00 pm
Student Lounge, Room 205, Convention Center
Microbes and Climate Change

Microorganisms have been changing the climate, and have been changed by the climate, throughout Earth’s history. Microorganisms respond to, adapt, and evolve in their surroundings at higher rates than most other organisms, allowing scientists to study the effects of climate change on microbes to understand and hopefully predict the future effects of climate change on all forms of life. Although scientists have been studying microbial ecosystems for many years, there remains much more to learn and understand about complex microbial functions and their interactions with climate change. The American Academy of Microbiology and American Geophysical Union convened a colloquium on March 3, 2016, bringing together experts from many scientific disciplines to discuss the current understanding of microbes and our changing climate, as well as gaps and priorities for future study.

This colloquium was a collaborative effort between the ASM and the American Geophysical Union (AGU), whose mission is to galvanize a community of Earth and space scientists that collaboratively advance and communicate science and its power to ensure a sustainable future. The report was released on April 17, 2017.

Near-patient and point-of-care (POC) testing for infectious disease diagnostics is rapidly evolving. The American Academy of Microbiology convened a colloquium in October 2016 to explore the impact of near-patient and POC tests on patient outcomes, healthcare delivery models, public health, and healthcare costs. The distinguished group of participants included representatives from clinical laboratories, academia, government agencies, foundations, and commercial industry. A key conclusion from the meeting is that as near-patient and POC testing is increasingly implemented in new settings and by non-laboratorians, clinical microbiology laboratory expertise is needed to ensure proper oversight. Utilization of trained personnel and evaluation of tests will ensure that the best-quality tests are ordered and interpreted correctly to benefit patient care. This report will be released on May 24, 2017.

There will be a “Meet-the-Experts” session with Melissa B. Miller, Ph.D., (Steering Committee Chair), and Robin Patel, Ph.D., at ASM Microbe, on Friday, June 2, at 2:00 pm. During this unique session, meeting attendees and representatives from the Press will have an opportunity to discuss the recommendations from the report with members of the Steering Committee.

Read the full report here: http://bit.ly/microbes-climate

Read the report at the link below on May 24, 2017: http://bit.ly/colloquia-reports
Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is an urgent global threat that is receiving unprecedented national and international attention. Resistance caused by bacterial pathogens has become a major focus. Recognizing the significance of AMR across the microbial sciences, the ASM is establishing a new initiative to complement existing efforts, facilitate synergy, and provide a mechanism to move projects forward. At an August 3, 2016, meeting, a Steering Committee of diverse experts met to identify needs and potential opportunities for ASM action in the areas of stewardship and surveillance, environmental issues, clinical issues, and global perspectives.

On May 3, 2017, the Academy hosted a panel discussion with the Science Diplomats Club at ASM Headquarters in Washington, DC. The Science Diplomats Club is a group of science attachés representing their countries from their embassies in DC. The meeting provided a platform to share the Steering Committee report as well as for U.S. Government representatives to update the community on the U.S. effort. Other country representatives presented their work and actions their countries are taking to address AMR. Outcomes include raised awareness of ASM’s efforts as well as opportunities to contribute to shared objectives for AMR stewardship and national action planning.

The ASM Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS) Coalition was established to identify practical, action-oriented solutions to overcome current barriers associated with NGS across various scientific disciplines, including clinical, biomedical, forensic, environmental, and agricultural sciences. A diverse NGS Steering Committee of experts was responsible for determining a strategic, step-wise approach for addressing each of the disciplines. The Steering Committee convened in September 2015 to discuss the short- and long-term goals of the Coalition, determine the initial areas of science to be covered, and identify relevant organizations and experts to serve on the Coalition.

The Coalition met in September 2016. Over the course of 12 to 18 months following this meeting, the Coalition members are tasked with identifying, prioritizing, and reviewing the status of actions chosen. The success of the Coalition will be measured by significant progress of identified NGS actions.

The report was released in February 2017.
Comments or Suggestions?

News and Views is developed by staff of the American Academy of Microbiology. We would like to hear your comments or suggestions on our newsletter. We also welcome your contributions of short articles or letters. Please contact Marina Moses, Academy Director, at mmoses@asmusa.org. If you prefer not to receive the Academy newsletter, please let us know by contacting academy@asmusa.org.

Interviews with Academy Fellows

Interviews with Fellows are posted on our website as well as on Facebook. If you would like to be interviewed, please contact:

academy@asmusa.org

To see other interviews of Fellows, please visit:


Click here to read the most recent interview with Dr. Petra Oyston.

Watch the video for the Academy Fellowship Program:


The American Academy of Microbiology Fellowship Program

Photo: John Enders, Irene Schwachman photograph

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