

Medical Faculty News



Faculty of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong

May 1997

Volume 2 Issue 1

A bulletin to keep alumni and friends in touch, and up to date.

110 YEARS AND GOING STRONG

The Faculty of Medicine is celebrating the 110th Anniversary this year. Initially founded as the "Hong Kong College of Medicine for Chinese" by the London Missionary Society in 1887, the Faculty was renamed the "Hong Kong College of Medicine" in 1907. When the University of Hong Kong was established in 1912, it was dissolved and merged into the University as the Faculty of Medicine.



School of Anatomy and Physiology in 1913

Our Faculty has the longest history of fostering and developing western medicine in the East. We aim to train doctors "to cure the sick, to relieve pain, and to comfort the dying".

To mark the 110th Anniversary, a scientific congress will be held from 24 to 26th October, 1997.

The objectives of this congress are:

- to highlight our expertise and achievements in medical teaching, research and service over the past 110 years;
- to publicize our ongoing collaboration with China and the rest of the world in training, education and research;
- to establish the Faculty as the gateway between China and the rest of the world for training, education and research;
- to renew contacts with alumni and friends of the Faculty.

Keynote speakers, deans and representatives from China and overseas medical universities will be invited to

participate. Alumni, students, staff and friends are invited to join in the celebration.

The opening ceremony will be held on 24th October, 1997 from 18:00 to 19:30, including a cocktail reception. A multidisciplinary scientific program will be held on Saturday and Sunday; 25 - 26th. Apart from keynote addresses, there will be 20 symposia covering a wide variety of topics including: cancer biology; genes, cells and medicine; mother, child and perinatology; microbes and the community; quality of life and care; tomorrow's doctors; clinical trials and medical ethics; traditional Chinese medicine; osteoporosis; and transgenic animal research. Video conference sessions will also be incorporated. Free communications are invited. A closing banquet will be held on Sunday, 26th Sunday at the Hong Kong Exhibition and Convention Centre. For details, please contact the Faculty office at 28192851.



Department of Anatomy and Physiology in 1997

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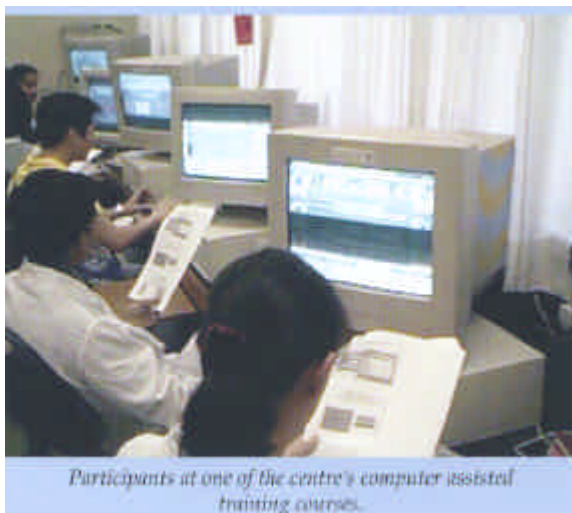
DEAN'S MESSAGE

Starting July 1997, our undergraduate students will be offered an elective introductory course in Chinese medicine. Our Faculty has already been charged with the duty to co-ordinate the research activities in this field both within and outside the University. When the University is ready to offer a degree course in Chinese medicine, our medical school will be actively involved in its organisation. Chinese medicine and other alternative medicine have been popular among the local population and indeed may complement Western medicine at all levels: the philosophy, the concept, and the approach to diseases and treatment. Hong Kong at this historical moment will play a strategic role in the integration of these streams of medicine.

CLINICAL TRIALS CENTRE

Over the past six months, the Clinical Trials Centre of the Faculty has progressed from being a vision of Professor Johan Karlberg to a fully operational body that has an educational programme, outside contracts and a variety of other activities. Professor Karlberg has been appointed as the Director of the Centre and the original working group has been expanded to form an advisory committee with Professor SK Lam as the first chairman.

The initial emphasis of the Centre is on training. Shortage of qualified staff is deemed to be a major constraint in the expansion of clinical trials in



Hong Kong. Eventually, the Centre would like to be the hub of multicentre clinical health studies that involve China and other countries in this region. As part of its promotional and educational activities, the Centre has developed a site on the World Wide Web (<http://www.hku.hk/ctc/>). Other than details of training programmes of the Centre, there are reviews of relevant articles and links to interesting medical sites. The sites will be developed further to provide a valuable resource for anyone interested in clinical trials.

For further enquires, please contact the Centre's Scientific Editor, Joan Marsh through the School of Postgraduate Medical Education and Training (Tel: 2819 9290).

CHINESE PAEDIATRIC FORUM

The Department of Paediatrics organized a Chinese Paediatric Forum from 15 to 18th November, 1996 to provide academic and professional exchanges among paediatricians and scientists with a special interest in providing health care for children of Chinese origin. The meeting was well attended by 400 delegates, including 99 from overseas. The meeting was



successful in enhancing academic and professional exchanges and heightened the awareness of the role that the Hong Kong Paediatric Centre can play in bridging the East and the West and in introducing new technology to China. The forum generated sufficient interest for China to continue the same forum in 1997.

OUR VIEWS...

The aims of this newsletter are to improve the awareness of the activities of members of the Faculty of Medicine, especially the collaborations between departments and to inform outside bodies or individuals about current activities of the Faculty. This newsletter will be published three times a year and sent free to all registered medical practitioners in Hong Kong. It will also be sent to overseas Medical Schools and recent graduates of the Faculty of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong. Please forward all correspondence to The Editor, Medical Faculty News,

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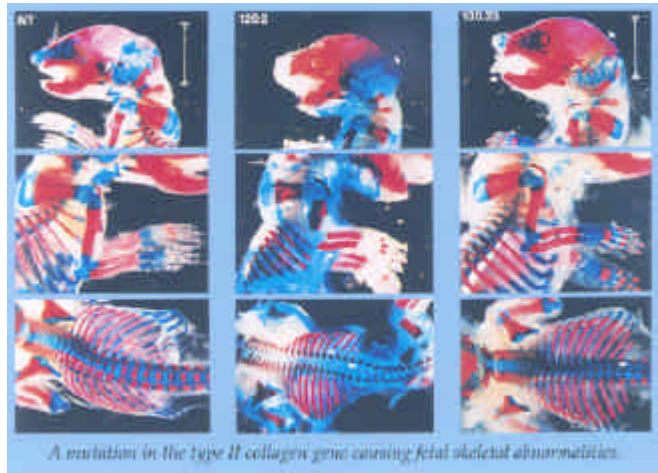
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RESEARCH GRANT COUNCIL AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Transgenic and Chimaeric Mice and The Control of Collagen Gene Expression During Embryogenesis

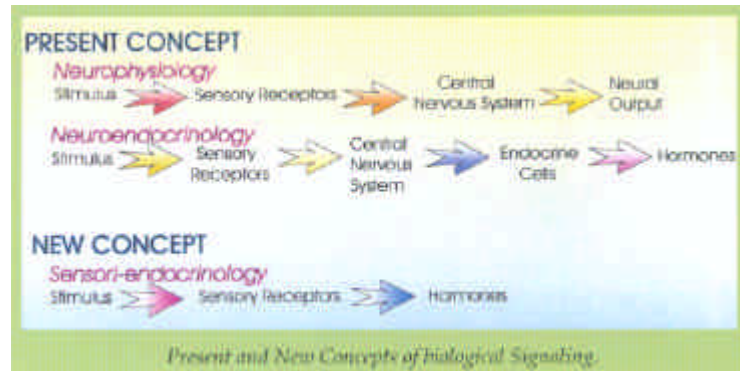
This project studied the type 11 collagen gene expression during development and the effect of mutation on the collagen protein and skeleton formation. Using transgenic mice, Prof K Cheah of the Department of Biochemistry, was able to identify the part of human type 11 collagen gene which controls synthesis of the collagen protein in the skeleton during fetal development. The mutation studies showed that alteration of the structure of the type 11 collagen resulted in abnormal development of the skeleton. This will help in the development of therapies for cartilage disorders in the future. Facilities for transgenic technology was set up in the Faculty during this project. This paved the way for the establishment of a Transgenic Centre in 1996.



New Concept of Direct Transduction of Sensory information to Hormones

A grant from the Research Grant Council was awarded to Prof S F Pang, Department of Physiology, in 1989. The above project was also funded partially by a Croucher Foundation Grant.

The objectives of the project were to propose and establish a new concept of signal processing. The study was on sensori-endocrine receptors which on receiving environmental signals, secrete hormones to effector organs. The photoendocrine cells of fish retinas and pineal of birds were studied in the project. Light stimulates the biosynthesis and secretion of melatonin by these photoendocrine cells. The regulation process and the importance to the system was studied.



Cellular and Molecular Studies of Neuronotropic Specific for Retinal Ganglion Cells

This project was conducted by Dr Raymond Chan of Department of Anatomy. The goal of the research was to find the natural substances that support and maintain the healthy growth of the retinal ganglion cells (RGCs) in the visual system. A new neuronotropic factor specific for RGCs was identified and named retinal ganglion neuronotropic factor. A specific monoclonal antibody was then developed and this was found to inhibit the growth of eye tumor and its metastases in mice. Further studies were done to elucidate the development of cells which secrete the factor. The amino acid sequence of the purified factor was studied and cells which produced the factor were cloned. The purified factor is a potential vaccine to prevent eye tumor.



ALUMNI NEWS. ...

Prof Lam Shiu-Kam

MBBS, MD, MRCP(UK), FHKAM(Med), FHKCP, FRCP, FRCP(E), FRCP(G), FACP, FACG, FRACP, was awarded the OBE for his contribution to medicine, particularly in the field of gastroenterology and hepatology. Professor Lam is the Head of the Department of Medicine, and Chief of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology.



DEVELOPMENTS...

Diabetic Management Training Course

A program to train physician trainees in China has been set up by Professor Karen Lam, Division of Endocrinology. This is a joint project between five major medical schools in China and the Department of Medicine with sponsorship from USA. In China where diabetes is a growing problem, such program will promote the standard of diabetes management in the country.

The trainee will receive six weeks of clinical attachment and small group discussion. A multi-disciplinary approach involves colleagues from various departments of the Faculty and Queen Mary Hospital. Eighteen to twenty four trainees per year for the next three to five years will be selected from major medical schools in China. These trainees will then be able to provide the diabetes management and education of primary care physicians in their own cities. Over time there will be a growing academic and research linkage between this faculty and all the medical schools and teaching hospitals in China.



Ongoing education of physician trainees to keep up-to-date with the advances in management of diabetes.

Medical Curriculum Update

The new medical curriculum will start in September 1997 and its preparatory work is progressing satisfactorily.

In late January this year, representatives from the Faculty, including members of the Foundation Course braved the cold and wet weather of Liverpool, UK, to see how a new curriculum was working there. Liverpool was chosen as it has a similar number of medical students to the University of Hong Kong, had a similar existing undergraduate program to ours, and also was in the first year of transition to a new program.

The group visited many of the departments, gained first-hand experience of problem based learning sessions, and also participated as external examiners in the clinical skills examination. The knowledge gained from this visit will be vital to the smooth transition to the new curriculum.



The visiting delegation from Hong Kong together with some of the curriculum development group at the University of Liverpool.



Simulated blood taking is one of the skills tested in the Clinical Skills examination.

RECENT MEETINGS...

First Molecular Embryology & Transgenic Technology Course in Asia

Transgenic Technology - the transfer of new genetic material (DNA) into the chromosome of plants and animals



Group photo of students with instructors and demonstrators.

is a powerful tool for research with clinical and therapeutic potentials.

In December 1995, a Transgenic Centre funded by the Hong Kong Industry Department, was set up in the Faculty. Its functions initially are to be a training centre, to provide a channel for technology transfer, and to introduce this state-of-the-art technology to the research community and to the biotechnology industry in Hong Kong and China. In the long term, by attracting enough funds, this centre will be the major location for the training and production of transgenic animals as well as a centre for research and development of new technology.

One of the first activities of the Centre was to run a three-week intensive practical and lecture course. This was

co-sponsored by the Clyde Wu Fund and the Faculty. The course, a first of its kind in Asia, was opened on 24th November 1996. The opening ceremony was attended by the Dean Prof SP Chow, ex-dean Prof HK Ma, Mr Francis Ho, the director-General of the Industry Department, Dr and Mrs Clyde Wu, and officiated by Dr Walter Ho and Prof Samuel Chan.

The course was supported by the support of local and overseas experts, postgraduate students, research and laboratory assistant. Dr Patrick Tam of the Children's Medical Research Institute, Sydney, and Dr Robin LovellBadge of the National Institute for Medical Research, London, spend more than three weeks of their time to come as co-ordinators for the course.

20 students from ten countries enrolled for the full course



Course students in the laboratory.

and a further 74 local researchers attended the lectures only component of the course. Though the course was intense, it was rewarding to all participants.

Forthcoming Event

The Department of Medicine is organizing a farewell dinner party in honour of Prof Sir David Todd and Prof Rosie Young's retirement. Both of them, alumni of the Faculty, have contributed significantly to our Faculty and the medical community. The party is scheduled on the 17th June at the Grand Ballroom, Conrad International Hotel. The Faculty would like to take this occasion to wish them the best in their retirement which will be spent overseas. Anyone interested please contact Miss Denise Yu at Tel : 2855 4607 or Fax 2855 1143 to join the farewell party.

**H O N G
K O N G
M E D I C A L
F O R U M**

The Hong Kong Medical Forum for 1997 will have a joint medical and surgical programme covering topics on gastroenterology, hepatology, neurology and nephrology. Local and overseas speakers have been invited. It will be held on 26-27th July. For information and registration please contact the forum co-ordinator, HKMF'97, University Department of Medicine, Queen Mary Hospital, Tel : 2855 4607, Fax : 2855 1143 or E-mail: dwyu@hku.hk.

RECENT MEETINGS...

Medical Research Conference 97, Department of Medicine

The Medical Research Conference organised by the Department of Medicine was held at the Hilltop Country Club on 25-26th January this year. Apart from members of the department, guests from the Department of Pharmacology, Pathology, Institute of Molecular Biology and other Hospital Departments were invited. Oral and poster presentations selected from 100 submitted were presented. Invited speakers were Prof Peter Fung and Dr George Tsao from the Department of Physics and Anatomy respectively. The results of the department's are published as a supplement of the *Hong Kong Practitioner*. This will be a continuous exercise to encourage local research and collaboration in the medical profession. The conference will be conducted again next year.

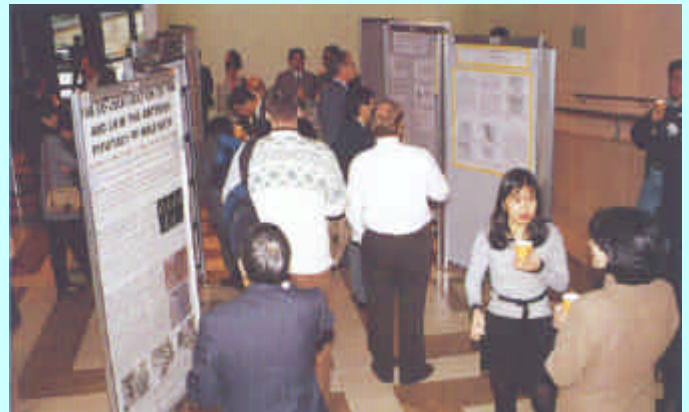
Prof Peter Fung, Department of Physics, on "Photoacoustics and Electron Spin Resonance in Medical Physics."



The International Meeting on Gastroenterology, Endocrinology and Reproduction

This was held on 9-10th December 1996 at the Rayson Huang Theatre, the University of Hong Kong. The meeting was organised by our Faculty, the Chinese University and the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong, the 4th Military Medical University and the Peking Union Medical College of China, in conjunction with the Society for the Study of Endocrinology, Metabolism and Reproduction of Hong Kong. In addition to local participants, there were representatives from China and overseas.

Poster Presentations at the International Meeting.



Symposium on Chinese Medicine and Public Health

Staff from the Medical and Science Faculties organised the first International Symposium on Chinese Medicine and Public Health. This was held on 23-24th November 1996 and attended by about 150 participants. Speakers were invited from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, UK, and USA to speak on the theory and usage of Chinese

medicine, its scientific basis, results from clinical studies, education and training, and government policies. As part of the Faculty's plans to promote work in Chinese medicine, collaboration with the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals is being formally established to enhance research and education.

Workshops on Opioid Research Across the Strait

Endogenous opioids were first discovered in the mid-1970s. These opioid peptides are first known to cause analgesia and euphoria, but other effects such as cardiac protection and hormone release have been attributed to endogenous opioid release. The need to facilitate interchange of ideas and research findings, lead to the first Orientation Workshop on Opioid Research across the Strait organized jointly by the Department of Physiology, the University of Hong Kong and the Department of Biology of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). This was held from 15 to 18th December 1996 in HKUST.

Participants of this workshop included 23 invited speakers from Hong Kong and overseas, and they presented their research findings followed by discussions. The speakers included four members of National Academy of Sciences and Prof TM Wong and Dr NS Wong of our faculty.

There were also two open forum sessions during which participants discussed research and future collaboration. As most participants felt that this interchange of ideas was much needed and very useful, a future workshop is planned for Beijing in 1998.