

In This Issue

New Sculpture	p. 2
Sterile Processing	p. 2
Fellows Graduation	p. 3
Dr. Norvell Coots	p. 4

CC NEWS

Clinical Center News

July/August 2024

Department of Transfusion Medicine Makes Final E-Wing Move

Staff complete their move into newly renovated labs, clinical spaces and offices

The Department of Transfusion Medicine (DTM) has completed its long-awaited move into the Clinical Center's newly renovated E-Wing.

DTM sections occupy the first, second and third floors, with the Blood Bank donor center and Dowling Clinic apheresis clinic centrally located on the ground floor off the Magnuson Building central corridor.

Dr. Kamille West-Mitchell, chief of DTM's Blood Services Section, said the clinics will now be more accessible and visible to Clinical Center patients, staff and visitors.

West-Mitchell said she looks forward to seeing how blood donors respond to the new facilities, which are bright and modern and offer expanded capacity.

"Our blood donors are so valuable to everything that we do," West-Mitchell said. "We really want to do as much as possible to make their experience a positive and rewarding one."

Other DTM sections will also move into state-of-the-art labs, production rooms and office space.

The department's old space had grown increasingly shopworn, cramped and, at times, eclipsed by the demands of new technology.

"It was built in the 1980s and really hadn't been remodeled," DTM Chief Dr. David Stroncek said.

The move into E-Wing enables many previously scattered lab and work groups to consolidate into a single, unified workplace worthy of today's workforce.

"It should be more efficient for them to operate, and they can better meet the needs of the patients and investigators," Stroncek said.

The Blood Bank donor center and Transfusion Services Lab will no



NIH CC Staff Sarah Fowler, Research Nurse Specialist, donates blood.

longer share the same floor, however. Staff will use a small service elevator, or dumb waiter, to transfer blood products between floors.

Planning for the 250,000-square-foot E-wing renovation first began in 2015. The project became the most complex in NIH history. Largely completed last fall, it is now home to some 1,500 staff from 11 institutes and centers across NIH.

DTM and the Center for Cellular Engineering (CCE) are the last to take up residency, due in part to the exacting standards required of its clinical space, manufacturing labs and equipment.

"We kept finding little things that need to be fixed," Stroncek said. "We've gotten a lot of help, and there [have been] a lot of people in the Clinical Center who worked really hard to make this happen."

One highlight of the new facilities is the new 12th floor GMP (good manufacturing practices) manufacturing space for the CCE Cell Therapy Manufacturing Section, which will open later this year.

The GMP facility will be used to produce a range of cell therapies in

aseptic production rooms, which are protected by special airlocks and other features to prevent contamination by viruses, bacteria and other microorganisms.

Stroncek said the space incorporates modular construction and panels that are easy to clean and tolerant of the intense cleaning required for GMP manufacturing spaces. "That is really a technical advancement," he said.

David Weir is a consultant who was brought in to coordinate DTM's complex move and ensure the continuous operation of vital services, such as the Blood Bank.

He said the collaboration across NIH to make the E-wing move successful has been extraordinary. "Moving is not easy. It can be emotional. It can be disruptive," he said. "It's taken a strong set of leaders and a strong team of employees to make this work."

—Sean Markey

To schedule an NIH Blood Bank donation, visit www.cc.nih.gov/blooddonor

New Sculpture Graces Clinical Center Walkway

Work by artist Mary Ellen Scherl celebrates the power of genetics to advance children's health



From left to right: National Human Genome Research Institute Director Dr. Eric Green, Dr. John Constantino, sculptor Mary Ellen Scherl, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Director Dr. Diana Bianchi, Clinical Center CEO James Gilman, NIH Office of Research Facilities Senior Architect Frank Piatkowski

On April 25 a new sculpture was unveiled in front of the NIH Clinical Center in an uncommon confluence of National DNA Day and Take Your Child to Work Day. “The Ladder” is a 7-foot high, 700-pound sculpture which features four babies climbing a DNA helix, reflecting the power of genetics to advance the health of children.

“The Ladder” was a chance discovery by Dr. Diana W. Bianchi, director of the National Institute

of Child Health and Human Development, when visiting Vanderbilt Children's Hospital in 2010.

As a neonatologist and a geneticist, Bianchi was immediately drawn to the piece and wanted to find out more about it. After a bit of sleuthing, she was able to track down the artist Mary Ellen Scherl. They eventually met in Boston.

Over time they became friends and Bianchi learned of Scherl's personal mission to track down her

birth family.

Scherl had been adopted and was undertaking commercial DNA testing as well as genealogical study to learn more about her family of origin—and Bianchi was uniquely positioned and skilled to help Scherl. By the end of 2016, they were able to definitively locate Scherl's biological mother and father.

They were also able to connect with Scherl's brother—Dr. John Constantino—a child psychiatrist, who turned out to be the director of the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center at Washington University, which was funded by NICHD, the institute that Bianchi now directs.

“The Ladder” itself also had a sibling: an identical sculpture that resided on the artist's estate. In deep appreciation Scherl generously donated it to the Clinical Center.

Fittingly, the unveiling in front of the Clinical Center teamed with families and children. The work is a testament to connection, Bianchi said. “It's not just a sculpture, it's a story about finding your family.”

“This sculpture is indeed powerfully symbolic of the fundamental reason for our existence,” said Clinical Center CEO Dr. James Gilman.

—Dan Silber

Sterile Processing Service: Innovation Unveiled!

The Sterile Processing Service (SPS) held an open house on May 2. The Nursing Department welcomed Building 10 staff to explore their newly renovated facilities located on B1 level in the Magnuson Building.

Event highlights included the unveiling of a new, state-of-the-art rack washer with the capacity to clean 300 instruments per hour, marking a substantial upgrade in SPS's processing capabilities.



Belinda Avila (center) provides an overview of the rack washer

Graduation Ceremony Honors Class of 2024 Fellows



The GME class of 2024 along with program leaders

NIH leadership, faculty, family and friends gathered in Masur Auditorium on June 14th to celebrate the graduating Class of 2024 Clinical Fellows.

The ceremony recognized more than 60 fellows from 30 programs and marked the first NIH Clinical Center-wide graduation ceremony for clinical fellows, a group comprised mainly of physicians, surgeons and dentists.

NIH Director Dr. Monica Bertagnoli shared recorded remarks via video with attendees followed by a joint clinical fellow graduation speech by Drs. Mian Bilal Khalid and Hanna Blaney from the gastroenterology fellowship program. Graduating fellows were recognized by their fellowship program directors, who presented them with their completion certificates. A celebratory reception for fellows, family and friends was supported through a partnership with the Foundation for the Advancement of Education in Science.

Executive Director of Graduate Medical Education Dr. Joyce Chung said Clinical Center CEO Dr. James Gilman “lent his full support to the idea of an inclusive ceremony for all graduating clinical fellows, whose momentum continued to grow.”

“Everyone seem[ed] to be pulling in the same direction wanting to have this happen,” she added, noting that the ceremony was the latest example of a broader effort to build community for NIH medical fellows.

Among the graduates were Dr. Meghan Yamasaki, an OB/GYN fellow specializing in infertility and family building. A co-chair of the Clinical Center Fellows Committee, Yamasaki said it was important for NIH to come together as a community “to celebrate the fellows and the mentors that have led them.”

“We forget about the mentors and the program directors and everyone that helped [fellows] get to this point. They played a huge role,” she said.

Yamasaki shared her hope that the campus-wide celebration becomes an annual tradition.

Dr. Ejiofor Ezekwe, a pediatrician and clinical fellow with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, co-chairs the Clinical Center Fellows Committee.

He said the ceremony offered fellows well-deserved recognition of their achievement and contributions and a fitting coda to their time at NIH.

“We’re all incredibly fascinating people, who’ve had very long

journeys to get to the place we are now—whether that’s as an NIMH psychiatry fellow, an NIAID fellow or an endocrinology fellow,” he said.

Ezekwe completed his own clinical allergy and immunology fellowship in July 2023 and is now undertaking two years of research on a rare blood disease.

“We all had really powerful stories about how research has touched us. Most of us [came] here because we’re actively interested in research. This place provides an incredible opportunity to do that,” Ezekwe said.

“I think the uniting factor [is that] we’re all physicians that want to hopefully make things better and really advance the field,” he said. “Not only from [the perspective of] taking care of patients but also finding new solutions.”

Chung, the Graduate Medical Education director, said NIH medical fellowships are distinct.

“The Clinical Center is a jewel of place, and it’s an incredible environmental in which to train,” she said. “We provide great care. We provide great training. We have a wonderful environment and staff.”

—Sean Markey

The Joint Commission Evaluation Results

Every three years, the Clinical Center anticipates the arrival of delegates from the Joint Commission, the country's premiere healthcare standards-setting and accrediting body, for a rigorous evaluation of its compliance with established standards. This year, the Joint Commission's visit arrived four months early.

This year's assessment was conducted by a panel comprising a physician, nurse, and life safety specialist. Touring the Clinical Center, the trio examined Clinical Center processes, including emergency management protocols, organizational quality, and culture.

The Clinical Center received the Commission's feedback and staff worked to address the findings by submitting written evidence of compliance.

During a recent town hall meeting, Dr. David Lang, chief of the CC's Office of Patient Safety and Clinical Quality, lauded the Clinical Center team for their exceptional performance during the survey. Describing the results of the evaluation as a "great survey" overall, he noted that staff were very engaged and well prepared.

Lang said members of the Joint Commission also commented that they were very impressed with the hospital and staff and by the Clinical Center's mission.

—Yvonne Hylton

Clinical Center Mourns Passing of Board Chair Dr. Norvell Coots



NIH Clinical Center staff are mourning the passing of Clinical Center Research Hospital Board (CCRHB) Chair Dr. Norvell "Van" Coots.

Coots died suddenly at age 65 in June following a horse-riding accident.

He joined the Clinical Center board in 2021 and served as its chair for the past two years.

“

The NIH Clinical Center lost a true multi-dimensional friend last week.

— Dr. James Gilman,
Clinical Center CEO

”

Known as an insightful and effective leader, Dr. Coots earned his medical degree at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center and went on to forge a distinguished 36-year career

as a U.S. Army officer.

He reached the rank of brigadier general and oversaw key medical care missions for the Army, including serving as commanding general of Regional Health Command Europe and as the command surgeon for the US Army Europe and 7th Army, among other posts.

Following his retirement from military service, Coots led Holy Cross Health in Silver Spring, Md., for seven years before stepping down earlier this year.

Clinical Center CEO Dr. James Gilman described Coots as a dynamic leader of the Clinical Center Research Hospital Board and one who will be missed.

“As CCRHB chair, his board meetings were lively and energetic. He kept board members engaged and interested,” Gilman wrote in a memo to staff.

“The NIH Clinical Center lost a true multi-dimensional friend last week,” Gilman added. “But Van would be among the first to remind us that the Clinical Center mission goes on and is larger than any single leader.”

“We honor his legacy by continuing the pursuit of excellence in providing care to the patients, our partners in the clinical research enterprise.”

The CCRHB was established in 2016 to oversee efforts to fortify a culture and practice of safety and quality and strengthen leadership for clinical care quality, oversight and compliance at the NIH Clinical Center.

Coots is survived by his wife, Claudia, and two high-school age children.

—Sean Markey

Clinical Center News

National Institutes of Health
Clinical Center
10 Center Drive, Room 6-2551
Bethesda, MD 20892-1504

Thoughts on the new design?
Let us know! ccpressgroup@cc.nih.gov

Office of Communications and Media Relations

Chief: Justin Cohen
Editor: Yvonne Hylton
Layout: Justin Baker
Contributors: Janice Duran, Cindy Fisher,
Donovan Kuehn, Sean Markey, Maria
Maslennikov, Sally Moore, Daniel Silber



cc.nih.gov/ccnews