

news

June/July 2023

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Building “facilities equal to our mission”

Groundbreaking for new hospital wing



Pictured at the groundbreaking is (left to right) Dr. Alfred Johnson, NIH deputy director for Management, Dr. Nina Schor, NIH deputy director for Intramural Research, Daniel Wheeland, NIH associate director for Research Facilities, Dr. James Gilman, NIH Clinical Center CEO, Andrea Palm, deputy secretary of Health and Human Services, Dr. Lawrence A. Tabak, acting NIH Director, Dr. Tara A. Schwetz, Ph.D., acting principal deputy director of NIH, Courtney Aklin, NIH acting associate deputy director, and Dr. Steven Rosenberg, Chief of the National Cancer Institute’s Surgery Branch.

The National Institutes of Health had a formal groundbreaking for a new hospital addition on May 16, 2023. The event kicked off construction of a new Surgery, Radiology and Laboratory Medicine (SRLM) wing that will help facilitate the discovery of state-of-the-art diagnostics and therapeutics for a wide range of diseases and conditions with the ultimate goal of finding cures.

“This effort was not about wanting new construction but simply about having facilities equal to our mission.”

- Clinical Center CEO Dr. James Gilman

The constructions work will add 547,290 square feet to the NIH Clinical Center and renovate approximately 82,000 square feet of existing space. Work is anticipated to last until 2029. NIH and Health and Human Services leaders support these changes to modernize hospital facilities to ensure that the Clinical Center can continue to provide high quality patient care alongside cutting-edge biomedical research.

New Pediatric department streamlines care

Clinical Center assessing how to expand services for children

The NIH Clinical Center is adjusting how it treats pediatric patients, and it marks a culture change.

In 2022, the hospital’s Pediatric Consult Service became the Department of Pediatrics. Dr. Deborah Merke was appointed chief of the new department which has been staffed with 12 people on the care team.

One of the first initiatives was to establish the Pediatric Hospital Medicine (PHM) service

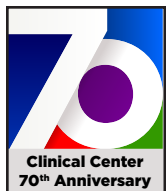
with the goal of creating 24/7 pediatric, age appropriate care by in-house hospitalists.

“A hospitalist is a physician who practices solely in the hospital environment providing 24/7 care. Actually, this model of care started in the mid-90s and was first developed in Pediatrics” said Dr. Jill Rothschild, who joined the Clinical Center as one of its first hospitalists in 2017.

Tied into this new approach is the desire to expand pediatric services offered by the

Clinical Center and its intramural (NIH-based) partners, including first in human treatments for young children. The strategy is to use early interventions that may cure diseases and prevent the morbidity and mortality that can occur in some rare diseases.

“The ultimate goal is to be strategic, build capacity and strengthen our infrastructure for Pediatrics to enable us to see more and more kids,” said Dr. Deborah Merke, chief of the Clinical Center Department of Pediatrics.



Clinical Center features STEM innovators

Ten statues of contemporary scientists on display through August 25, 2023

Dr. Danielle Twum, combines her training as a cancer immunologist with the skills she has learned working in biotech to translate scientific jargon into every day, accessible language.



Dr. Wendy Bohon studies earthquakes and mountain building processes and works to improve geologic hazards communication.



Dr. Joyonna Gamble-George is an Underrepresented Biomedical Researcher scholar looking at prescription opioid misuse, heart failure and genetic risk factors involved in inflammation in systemic lupus erythematosus using dataset from the NIH All of Us research program.



Dr. Ciara Sivels is a nuclear engineer at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, where she works on projects using radiation detection and modeling.

NIH Scientific Review Officer **Dr. Lataisia Jones**, visited the NIH Clinical Center with friends to see her statue. Jones works in the Scientific Review Branch at the NINDS and is the first African American to earn a PhD from the Department of Biomedical Sciences at Florida State University.



Jones with her statue at the Clinical Center



Aisha Lawrey, seen here visiting her statue at the Clinical Center has 20 years of experience working in industry, government, nonprofits and education as a STEM advocate.

Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young serves as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's under secretary for Research, Education, and Economics and chief scientist.



Fast facts about the exhibit

This year, the Clinical Center celebrates seven decades of supporting "firsts" – first innovations on diagnoses for disease, first application of technology and novel approaches and first treatments for our patients. And this summer, it won't just be the hospital's walls featuring artistic creations.

From May 22 through August 25, 2023, the NIH Clinical Center is hosting ten statues from #IfThenSheCan – The Exhibit. These 3-D printed, life-sized statues feature women innovators in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

The hospital's Office of Communications and Media Relations selected this unique project as a natural tie to the unique research and care environment exemplified by the NIH Clinical Center.

The IF/THEN project seeks to further advance women in (STEM) by empowering current innovators and highlighting positive and successful female professional role models.

Full story online at www.cc.nih.gov/cnews

- Donovan Kuehn

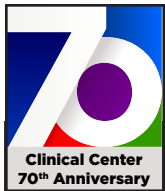


Dana Bolles started at NASA in 1995 as a payload safety engineer in the space shuttle program at Kennedy Space Center and has worked at four NASA centers and NASA headquarters.

Dr. Tiffany Panko is an early-career researcher and director of the Deaf Health Laboratory at Rochester Institute of Technology.



Dr. Jessica Taaffe is a PhD microbiologist, and has worked at the NIH, as a postdoc in Dr. Patrick Duffy's Laboratory of Malaria Immunology and Vaccinology at NIAID.



"This is a noble purpose"

NIH Clinical Center celebrates its 70th year of operation



"We are here today to lay the cornerstone of a building which will be devoted to the service of mankind. The men and women who work in this clinical research center will be striving to save human lives and to prevent human suffering. This is a noble purpose."

President Truman laying cornerstone of the Clinical Center

These words came from President Harry S. Truman at the dedication of the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center in June 1951 and still ring true today.

The NIH Clinical Center, the world's largest hospital devoted to clinical research, opened its doors in July 1953 with a focus on improving public health. The first patient was a Maryland farmer named Charles Meredith who came to the Clinical Center for cancer treatment. Since then, more than half a million patient volunteers from all 50 states and from all over the world have participated in clinical research at the hospital.

Approximately 1,500 studies are currently in progress at the Clinical Center. About half the studies are the first tests of new medications or medical treatments in people. The rest are natural history studies of diseases, including many rare diseases.

About 10,000 diseases are identified as rare and considered to impact fewer than 200,000 people in the U.S. Natural history studies lead to better understanding of how diseases develop and to improvements in prevention and treatment.

The Clinical Center has gone through many expansions and changes, but remains

Research discoveries at the Clinical Center include:

- *Discovering fluoride's ability to prevent tooth decay*
- *Developing the test to diagnose cervical cancer*
- *The first chemotherapy treatment for childhood leukemia and Hodgkin's disease*
- *The first use of immunotherapy to treat the cancer melanoma*
- *The first use of AZT (azidothymidine) for the treatment of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)*
- *The first blood tests for hepatitis and AIDS, which made the national blood supply safer*
- *The first gene therapy which transplants healthy genes into cells to replace missing or defective genes and correct genetic disorders*
- *The first controlled trials of lithium's effect on depression*
- *Developing treatments for Ebola and Covid-19*

steadfastly true to its mission to provide hope through pioneering clinical research to improve human health.

In 2023, the hospital celebrates seven decades of supporting "firsts" – first innovations on diagnoses for disease, first applications of technology and novel approaches and first treatments for its patients.

This celebration looks fondly at the Clinical Center's past, its partnership with patients, their families and staff and the promise of the future as the hospital continues to innovate and provide a model environment for clinical research, patient care and training future generations of clinician scientists.

As Truman said in concluding his remarks: "The work that is done here in Bethesda will bring life and health to all mankind. This center is a specific and exciting expression of man's humanity to man. It will save the lives and alleviate the suffering of our own children and grandchildren. But, more than that, it will serve men of all religions, all races, and all nations - everywhere in the world."

- Donovan Kuehn

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Clinical Center News

Editor: Donovan Kuehn | Layout: Justin Baker

Contributors: Robert Burleson, Janice Duran, Cindy Fisher, Yvonne Hylton, Maria Maslennikov, Daniel Silber, Karen Byrne

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

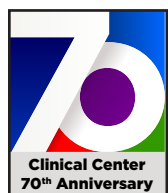
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Contact: Donovan Kuehn | donovan.kuehn@nih.gov

Collins looks to Clinical Center's past, present and future



70th anniversary
Grand Rounds
lecture features
former NIH director



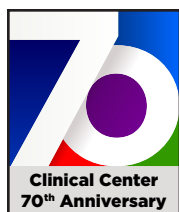
Former NIH director Dr. Francis S. Collins

Former NIH Director, Dr. Francis S. Collins, will present this year's 70th anniversary Grand Rounds lecture on the critical role the NIH plays in medical research. This will be his first time speaking to an NIH-wide audience since December 2021.

He will present his lecture, titled Seven Decades at the Forefront of Medical Research: The NIH Clinical Center, on June 28 at 1 pm in the Lipsett Amphitheater. The lecture will also be broadcast at <https://videocast.nih.gov/watch=49881>.

Collins, a senior investigator for the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) and special advisor to President Biden for Special Projects, is a renowned physician and geneticist who discovered the genes associated with a number of diseases and led the Human Genome Project. He was NIH Director from 2009 to 2021, serving under three presidents over 12 years. Clinical Center CEO Dr. James Gilman will introduce Collins.

- Donovan Kuehn



Clinical Center art exhibit: "Science Related"

Artwork with a scientific bent or created by people with scientific and medical backgrounds.

This summer, the art program will feature "Science Related" – artwork with a scientific bent or created by people with scientific and medical backgrounds.

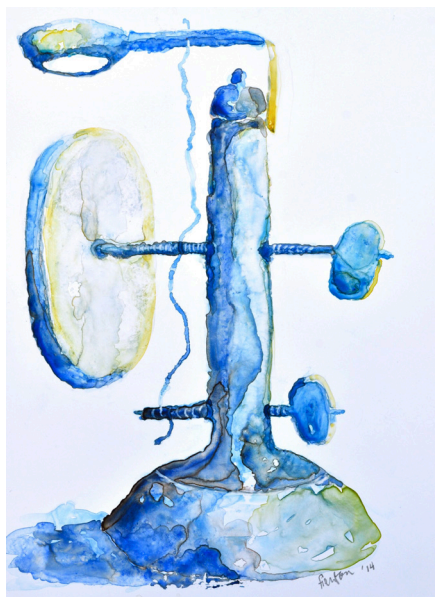
Five artists will exhibit their pieces, including:

Wood artist and illustrator Candice Tavares, who is a clinical pharmacy specialist in palliative care at Medstar Washington Hospital Center. "I'm a lifelong creative but it took many years for me to call myself an artist. Creativity has always brought me peace, so in the midst of all the COVID crazy I started drawing my feelings," said Tavares.

Tavares earned her doctorate of pharmacy from Howard University College of Pharmacy and went on to complete specialized training in palliative care at Abington Memorial hospital and Ohio State University.

Amy Lamb, worked at NIH and the Institute for Immunology in Basel, Switzerland as a post-doctoral fellow. She earned her PhD in Zoology from the University of Michigan. She creates large format botanic photographs with close-up images of flowers and fruit to illuminate "their splendor, hold time at bay and create a dialogue between the viewer and the natural world."

Michele Banks, also known as Artologica, creates abstract paintings inspired by science and medicine. Her paintings and collages explore neuroscience, microbiology, climate change and more. She studied at George Washington University and Harvard.



Fierston - Italian wooden microscope



Fierston - Galvanometer

Sue Fierston teaches workshops in the studio arts program at the Smithsonian Museums and is an artist-in-residence at Yosemite National Park in California. She received a grant from Montgomery County Arts Council to paint the historic microscopes from the Golub Collection of Antique Microscopes at UC Berkeley.

Barbara Southworth's work combines her twin passions of art and science. She is a printmaking photographer known for landscapes celebrating color, wildness and native diversity. Southworth graduated from the Rochester Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Fine Arts and from Johns Hopkins University with a Master of Science in Environmental Earth Sciences and Policy. (Exhibiting October 7, 2023 – January 9, 2024)

Art will be on display in two segments from July 8 through October 7, 2023 and October 7 through January 9, 2024.

Since 1984, the Clinical Center Fine Art Program has displayed carefully selected works in common areas, patient care areas and galleries throughout the Clinical Center. Patients, NIH employees and visitors all benefit from the stimulating, hope-filled pieces that promote healing in an aesthetically pleasing environment. This collection has more than 2,000 pieces of art including photography, sculptures, paintings, collages, watercolors, textiles, folk art and glass.

- Donovan Kuehn

Gallin retires from NIH after storied career

Former Clinical Center director spent over half a century at NIH



Dr. John I. Gallin, former NIH associate director for Clinical Research and chief scientific officer of the NIH Clinical Center

After 50 years, Dr. John I. Gallin is hanging up his lab coat.

Gallin retired from federal service on March 25, 2023, as the NIH associate director for Clinical Research and chief scientific officer of the NIH Clinical Center. He also served as the tenth, and longest serving, director of the NIH Clinical Center from 1994-2017. Among the many innovations during his tenure at the Clinical Center, he oversaw the expansion of the hospital, the establishment of a Department of Bioethics, the initiation of the Bench to Bedside Awards to foster laboratory and clinical collaborations and the development of a clinical research training curriculum which reaches over 25,000 students in 168 countries every year.

While he is stepping away from his administrative duties, Gallin will continue his research of rare immune disorders of phagocytes, immune cells that can boost immune responses, with a focus on chronic granulomatous disease (CGD). While he was a full-time administrator, he remained committed to research and his laboratory's investigations have reduced life-threatening bacterial and fungal infections in patients with CGD and phagocytic diseases.

Before serving as Clinical Center director, Gallin worked as Director of the Intramural Research Program for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). He was at NIAID during the height of HIV/AIDS epidemic. As Congress responded to researchers' requests for resources to study the disease and invest in potential cures, Gallin innovated by contracting to ramp up research capability quickly and implemented electronic infrastructure to handle record keeping and track research and samples.

While Gallin received countless honors throughout his career, at core what really drove him was the potential of medicine to help people.

As a child, Gallin had a strong interest in science. And medicine made an impression on him after his mother became acutely ill with severe hemoptysis, the spitting of blood from the lungs which can be caused by bronchitis, bronchogenic cancer and pneumonia.

Gallin personally understood the complexity and challenges of the hospital environment. During his internship and residency at Bellevue hospital, Gallin worked on tuberculosis and ended up becoming infected with the pathogen.

"Fifteen years later, I had to have a thoracotomy because I had tuberculosis. I got it because I was not, at the time, working in a good environment. I will not have my staff working with the organism [tuberculosis] unless the conditions are right," said Gallin in a 1993 interview with the Office of NIH History and Stetten Museum.

He was at the helm in 2014 when a number of U.S. healthcare workers were exposed to or infected with Ebola Virus.

Navigating an atmosphere of anxiety within the hospital and across the country, treatment and care for the patients was meticulously planned to protect patients and staff and all admitted patients were eventually discharged after they were free of the virus and no longer contagious.

Gallin set up the Clinical Center's Patient Advisory Group in 1998 to elicit patient feedback in a forum open to all patients and their families. The PAG continues to meet today.

He, along with Clinical Center nurses, worked with the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health who provided funding to build the NIH Edmond J. Safra Family Lodge. The Lodge, which opened in 2005, offers a no-cost place to stay for families and loved ones of adult patients who are receiving care at the NIH Clinical Center.

Gallin's connection to patients was demonstrated at his retirement ceremony. With Dr. James Gilman, CEO of the NIH Clinical Center, as master of ceremonies for the event, the lineup featured many prominent researchers and physicians.

But the last speaker who introduced Gallin was Amanda Young, a patient of his since August 1990.

At an early age, Young contracted a host of diseases that were almost unimaginable: spinal meningitis, gas gangrene, salmonella poisoning of the sinuses and an abdominal abscess among them. Yet doctors were baffled as to why. After 13 years of study, Gallin was finally able to deliver a diagnosis - the genetic defect of the IRAK-4 deficiency.

"Thank you for taking a chance on me. Thank you for never giving up. Thank you for doing what you said you were going to do. Thank you for including me and letting me be an advocate for this amazing hospital. We will never be able to properly thank you for all that you are to me and my family," said Young in heartfelt and tearful remarks at Gallin's retirement ceremony.

The guest of honor followed Young's remarks. "Amanda, you are what consider to be the most important people

on this campus: our patients. Without our patients there would be no clinical research," said Gallin, wiping away a tear after Young's moving commentary. "I love this place, and that is why I have stayed her for 52 years...For

me it is the incredible diversity of people – all of you – who I have had the opportunity to work with to make things happen."

"As a physician investigator, I know firsthand how supportive the hospital is for the patients who often come at the scariest times of their lives as we provide them hope. [I know] how incredible the Clinical Center is as a hospital – supporting care while doing cutting-edge clinical research that has changed medicine over the last seven decades. So, it is for all these reasons, made possible by the wonderful people who work here, that I love this place. It has been a true privilege to spend my career working with all of you," said Gallin.

Full story online at www.cc.nih.gov/ccnews

- Donovan Kuehn



Amanda Young, a long-time patient of Dr. Gallin

Hospital welcomes students back for Take Your Child to Work day



Children explore the clinical laboratory experience at the 2023 Take Your Child to Work Day

For the first time since 2020, the Clinical Center hosted hundreds of future scientists onsite.

On April 27, 2023, the NIH Take Your Child to Work Day held activities virtually and in person all over the NIH campus.

Kids in grades 1 through 12 were able to explore age-appropriate career paths in science and public service at the nation's medical research agency. The campus also hosted Earth Day events.

The hospital hosted a number of hands-on activities. The Clinical Laboratory Experience had staff clinical scientists present various tests performed within the NIH clinical labs and then invited the 6 to 8-year-olds to try their own experiments.

To enhance the imaginative experience, participants were given their own disposable lab coats to use throughout the day. Parents were sent generic NIH-branded badges that the kids could color and personalize.

The NIH Library in the Clinical Center also hosted a short tour open to 6 to 14-year-olds where children could explore the world of 3D printing and its applications at NIH. Every attendee received a 3D-printed souvenir.

Take Your Child to Work Day is sponsored by the NIH Office of Research Services.

PEDIATRIC from page 1

The team has been working with other NIH institutes to create this new service, which is providing 24/7 in-house care for pediatric inpatients.

"It's bringing it all together under one umbrella, so it's more efficient use of pediatric resources. The 24/7 care from a pediatric hospitalist, along with daytime care from our pediatric nurse practitioners, is helping improve treatment for pediatric patients in the hospital... [O]ur goal is safe, high-quality, pediatric care," added Merke.

One huge change has been streamlining patient care. There are 15 NIH institutes that admit children in the Clinical Center. The new department means that instead of each Institute taking the lead for providing care of hospitalized children enrolled in their protocols, there's now pediatric hospitalists and pediatric nurse practitioners within the Department of Pediatrics who are onsite providing care and integrated into a team approach with the Institute investigators. The pediatric hospitalists also work with the pediatric oncologists who are in-house 24/7 taking care of transplant and cancer patients.

"The PHM service is a delight to work with. My service specifically and the surgeons in general value the services provided by the PHM service. The practitioners in the PHM service are approachable, and are a joy to work with.



Members of the NIH Clinical Center Department of Pediatrics: First row (left to right) Dr. Tamara Goodman, Dr. Jill Rothschild, Dr. Deborah Merke, Dr. Uma Subramanian, Ruth Parker, DNP, Sandy Chow, NP-Back row (l-r) Dr. Alan Quillian, Dr. Andrea Pearson, Dr. Mike Parsons, Ibukun Agbede, NP Not pictured: Dr. Ante Wind, Dr. Jeanette Beaudry

In my opinion, the care of our littlest patients has improved with the PHM service on board at the Clinical Center," said Dr. Prashant Chittiboia, a clinical investigator in the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke's Neurosurgery Unit for Pituitary and Inherited Diseases and chief surgeon of the Clinical Center.

With complex care, the Pediatric department maintains flexibility in managing the wide range of studies and different populations seen at the Clinical Center. "Drs. Deborah Merke, Jill Rothschild and all the members of the CC Pediatric department should be given great credit for the work they've done to revamp and improve pediatric care at the NIH Clinical

Center, especially for standing up a first-class pediatric inpatient service. A significant proportion of patients admitted to the Clinical Center are pediatric, and having an inpatient service staffed and run by pediatricians has had an immediate effect on improving patient safety and will go a long way to ensure the children we treat on investigational trials at the NIH receive the best care possible," said Rear Admiral Richard Childs, MD, senior investigator for Transplantation Immunotherapy and clinical director for the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

Full story online at www.cc.nih.gov/ccnews
- Donovan Kuehn

Rebuilding trust and community engagement

Panelists discuss police practices at NIH and outside communities

Prompted by the Tyre Nichols case and other police-related events, the Clinical Center's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) program hosted "A Facilitated Discussion on Police Brutality" on Tuesday, March 21st and a second discussion on Tuesday, April 18th. This discussion was the first of its kind at the hospital.

In January 2023, Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old Black man, was pulled over in a traffic stop in Memphis, Tenn. The incident turned violent, with five police officers captured on body camera footage brutality beating Nichols for about three minutes. Three days after the incident Nichols died from his injuries and criminal charges were brought against the five officers.

Dr. James Gilman, CEO of NIH Clinical Center, opened the discussion by explaining that many staff at the hospital were hurting and bothered by incidents like the one involving Tyre Nichols. Feeling that simply blasting an email to employees wasn't enough, Gilman consulted with Cecilia Henry, the hospital's scientific diversity advisor, about hosting a forum to discuss the issue. The March and April discussions included prominent speakers from the NIH community, including:

- *Dr. James Gilman, CEO of NIH Clinical Center*
- *Kevin Williams, Esquire, Director for the NIH Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*
- *Leslie Campbell, Acting Chief of NIH Division of Police, Office of Research Services*
- *Stephon Scott, Senior Policy Advisor for NIH Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*
- *Kay Johnson Graham, Policy Advisor for NIH Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*
- *Cecelia Henry, Scientific Diversity Advisor for NIH Clinical Center*
- *Brenda Robles, Certified Medical Interpreter, NIH Clinical Center Department of Social Work*
- *Daryl Holder, Special Assistant to the Chief Operating Officer and the Chief Medical Officer for NIH Clinical Center*

During the first discussion, Kevin Williams, the director for the NIH Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, shared his experience of forgetting his ID access (PIV) card, a familiar experience for federal employees. He called the NIH Police for help in accessing his locked suite, but despite being the director with authorization to the building and his office, an error meant Williams was denied entry. Williams recounted feeling like the situation was spiraling out of control, with two armed and skeptical officers, through a simple error



Leslie Campbell, acting chief of the NIH Division of Police

and no fault of his own.

Acting police chief Leslie Campbell, gave an overview of the NIH Division of Police's mission, vision, values and the Presidential Taskforce on 21st Century Policing.

In 2022, the NIH Police received 26,000 calls for service and conducted 578 traffic stops. Campbell expressed his hope that every citizen's contact with the police would align with the NIH Police's mission and values but acknowledged that he could not guarantee it.

According to the acting chief, the NIH Division of Police holds its police officers accountable through a process of reporting and terminating.

Campbell stated, "We terminate officers who violate our oath...I commit to you, I commit to my officers that we will treat everyone on campus with dignity."

Campbell shared that the NIH Police are working to reform the requirements for the use of force, training and increase community engagement. He also provided recommendations on what to do if stopped by an officer.

"Cooperate and ask the officer for name or badge number if you feel your rights are being violated or the stop is unjust. Police have numbers on their cars, write it down, take copious notes." He also suggested citizens take opportunities to interact with the police officers to help rebuild trust and confidence.

"We will treat the community with dignity and respect. Officers find themselves in situations where we must make split second decisions. I will not stand for police violence," said Campbell.

Audience members were engaged and asked Campbell about hotspot policing, a strategy which focuses on small geographic areas or places, usually in urban settings; historical issues involving power and how many police officers have targeted the Black community; the best ways to respond to mental health crises; bystanders' rights to film police

interactions, who sets law enforcement standards and calls for police defunding.

"I'm not an advocate for defunding but rather for reforming the police. By defunding the police, what happens is you limit the service law enforcement can provide. We don't live in utopia...there is a need for law enforcement to provide service to the community. Having good quality service and compassion is key."

Campbell also emphasized the need to hold officers accountable for any incidents of escalation, violence and acts of racism.

Gilman addressed a question to acting chief Campbell. "The tactics are designed for me to lose my cool and they did that with Tyre Nichols. The video shows officers giving him conflicting directions and some saying, 'no get back down' and it's really designed to make people lose their cool. What are your thoughts on that? How are we supposed to make sure we keep the wits about us whenever we are stopped?"

"That is not the way officers are trained. Proper training tells you that when there's more than one officer on scene, one officer takes charge, so the individual knows exactly what to do...It is our job in law enforcement to control the situations, it is our job in law enforcement to de-escalate situations," responded Campbell. He also reassured that the Memphis police officers were wrong in their approach and that's not the standard.

Daryl Holder, special assistant to the NIH Clinical Center's Chief Operating Officer and Chief Medical Officer, shared how he grew up in rural Alabama and during his time in the U.S. Navy he would always hang his uniform on the passenger side because if the police didn't respect him, they could "respect the uniform."

Kevin Williams, director of the NIH EDI program, asked about the screening process for those looking to join the police force.

"One of the major reforms in policing is recruiting and hiring" Campbell said. "To improve this, at the NIH we reach out to all segments of the population to try and find the best qualified officers."

Full story online at www.cc.nih.gov/ccnews

- Janice Duran

Great Teachers lecture addresses perinatal depression research and treatment

Meltzer-Brody recognized as Distinguished Clinical Research Scholar



Dr. Samantha Meltzer-Brody (second from right) was presented with the 2023 Great Teachers certificate by (l-r) Dr. Benjamin Solomon, Dr. Maryland Pao and Dr. Thomas Burklow

On April 12, Dr. Samantha Meltzer-Brody was recognized as the 2023 Distinguished Clinical Research Scholar and Educator in Research (DCRSER). Meltzer-Brody, an internationally recognized physician-scientist in perinatal depression, is the Assad Meymandi Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill and directs the UNC Center for Women's Mood Disorders.

As the 2023 NIH Clinical Center's DCRSER honoree, Meltzer-Brody gave a "Great Teachers Lecture," a special session of the weekly Clinical Center Grand Rounds program.

The Great Teachers Lecture Series invites nationally recognized investigators and educators to share their expertise on topics while informing and inspiring principal investigators, staff clinicians, clinical researchers and research trainees.

Meltzer-Brody's presentation was entitled, "From Bench to Bedside: A Translational Approach to Innovation in Research and Treatment of Perinatal Depression." Meltzer-Brody is an advocate for prenatal care, innovation and transformation of mental health care. Her research investigates the epidemiologic and biological predictors of perinatal

depression including genetic, neurosteroid and other neuroendocrine biomarkers as well as the impact of adverse life events. She has been the academic Principal Investigator for novel clinical trials developing an effective new pharmacologic treatment for postpartum depression called brexanolone, which is now FDA approved.

Meltzer-Brody was named to the "2021 Forbes - The Visionary List: Women Over 50 Shaping the Future of Science, Technology and Art" and the Forbes List of "Women over 50 Working to Improve our Collective Mental Health." She was also ranked in 2021 by Expertscape, as the number one expert in the world for postpartum depression. Most recently, in June 2022, she was named to the Forbes list of 16 Healthcare Innovators You Should Know.

This lecture took place in person at Lipsett Amphitheater. Following the lecture, Dr. Benjamin Solomon, the Clinical Center Medical Executive Committee chair and clinical director for the National Human Genome Research Institute, presented a certificate of appreciation to Meltzer-Brody.

The lecture is archived and available for viewing at <https://videocast.nih.gov/watch=49240>

- Janice Duran

Stem cell transplant patient reflects on his journey

Assessments continue five years after transplant

In 2015, 21-year-old John Vasquez of San Antonio, Texas, knew he had to do something about the extreme fatigue, bruising and bleeding he was experiencing.

"I hoped it would stop, but finally, when I was attending a local football game, one side of my body went numb. My doctor said, 'Your blood counts were so low I am amazed that you were able to even walk in here,'" recalled Vasquez.

After being diagnosed with aplastic anemia, a condition that occurs when the body stops producing enough new blood cells, Vasquez was started on routine treatments with mixed results. He was eventually asked to consider a potentially lifesaving stem cell transplant.

He was approved for a stem cell transplant as part of a new clinical trial testing the use of cord blood stem cells with half-matched stem cells donated from his brother, Isaiah. He arrived at NIH in June 2017 and the transplant occurred on August 11, 2017.

Vasquez was the very first patient admitted for this study, making him a "first in human" recipient of this treatment.

In early 2018, after a nine-month outpatient and inpatient stay at NIH, Vasquez returned home to continue his recovery.

"When I first got home, I was just trying to recover from the experience and catch up with my son Gavin. But NIH continues to be a part of my life because my follow-up evaluations. The first year, I returned every three months, and then it became once a year."

In August 2022, Vasquez reached the five-year anniversary of his stem cell transplant. In recent visits, his examinations went beyond routine blood work and pulmonary function testing to determine if any medications needed adjustment. His care team also started additional tests scanning his bone density, examining his mouth and testing his eyes for dryness.

While the test results are important, they're just one part of Vasquez's health assessment. The care team also tracks how he is feeling overall and how he manages activities he couldn't accomplish prior to his treatment.

Full story online at www.cc.nih.gov/ccnews

- Robert Burleson