

Dr. William Muller Receives NIH MERIT Award

Dr. William Muller, professor of pathology and laboratory medicine, has been named a recipient of the National Institutes of Health MERIT (Method to Extend Research in Time) Award by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. This important and highly selective award is bestowed upon researchers whose innovative work is distinctly superior and shows significant promise in the future. The \$2.1 million five-year grant will support Dr. Muller's investigations of inflammation, such as its mechanisms and ways to control them, and may hold broad potential for future clinical applications.

Inflammation is a wide field of study that has increasingly become an area of interest for many researchers. Inflammation is the first response of the immune system to any damaged tissue. White blood cells (leucocytes) move from blood vessels into the inflamed tissue, in effect "healing" the damaged tissue by removing bacteria and cellular debris. Inflammation is a component to a host of maladies, ranging from the unpleasant-but-nonfatal (tonsillitis, eczema, rheumatoid arthritis) to more complicated, possibly fatal diseases and conditions, among them Type II diabetes, atherosclerosis, inflammatory bowel disease, and various pulmonary diseases such as asthma.

One of Dr. Muller's major contributions is the discovery of how two molecules, PECAM and CD99, are involved in diapedesis – the inflammatory process by which white blood cells move into neighboring tissue. He has shown that by blocking the function of PECAM, it is possible to block diapedesis, and thereby arrest inflammation. Similarly, blocking the function of CD99 also blocks diapedesis – but at a later stage, leaving white blood cells "stuck," halfway between the cells at the endothelial border.

"This grant will help us identify the role of CD99 in diapedesis, including the unusual, but probably important, instances when the molecules migrate through the endothelial cells rather than between them – a process called transcellular migration," said Dr. Muller. "We are especially interested in how white blood cells migrate through the cytoplasm of endothelial cells at the blood-brain barrier."

Dr. Muller's MERIT Award marks the second year in a row that faculty from Weill Cornell have been chosen for this highly prestigious honor. Dr. Aaron Marcus, professor of medicine and professor of medicine in pathology and laboratory medicine, received a \$2.8 million NIH MERIT grant last year for his research in cell-cell interactions in thrombosis.

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Author Laurie Garrett to Present Arthur Ashe Visiting Professor Lecture (December 8)

Award-winning journalist and author Laurie Garrett will be presenting the Arthur Ashe Visiting Professor Lecture, hosted by the Department of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College, on December 8 at 11 a.m. in Uris Auditorium. The topic of her lecture is “AIDS: The Lessons Not Learned, and the Perils That We Face.”

Garrett is recognized as one of the leading journalists to have chronicled issues of global and public health, with a particular focus on newly emerging and re-emerging diseases, including AIDS, the Ebola virus, and SARS, for which she delivered the Jill and Ken Iscol Distinguished Environmental Lecture, hosted by Cornell University and held at the Medical College, in 2003. She is a senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations, and best-selling author of “The Coming Plague: Newly Emerging Diseases in a World Out of Balance” and “Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health.” Garrett is the only writer ever to have been awarded all three of the Big “Ps” of journalism: The Peabody, The Polk (twice) and The Pulitzer.

Garrett graduated from the University of California at Santa Cruz with a degree in biology. During her Ph.D. studies in bacteriology and immunology at the University of California at Berkeley, she began reporting on science news at KPFA, a local radio station. Finding journalism more interesting than graduate school, Garrett joined KPFA full time, eventually winning the 1977 George Foster Peabody Award in Broadcasting for co-producing a documentary series called “Science Story.” In 1998, she received the George C. Polk Award for International Reporting, for “Crumbled Empire, Shattered Health,” a series of 25 articles on the public health crisis in the former Soviet Union. In 2000, she received the Polk Award again for Best Book, for her report on the weakened global public-health infrastructure in “Betrayal of Trust.” Garrett won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Exploratory Journalism for her embedded reporting of the Ebola outbreak in Zaire.

Garrett has received multiple awards and honors, and holds two honorary doctorates. She has written for numerous publications, including Newsday, Foreign Affairs, Esquire, Vanity Fair, The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, and Current Issues in Public Health. She has appeared frequently on national television programs, including “Nightline,” “News Hour with Jim Lehrer,” “The Charlie Rose Show,” “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” “Dateline,” and CNN’s “The International Hour” and “Talkback.”

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Departmental Associates Hosts Talk on Avian Flu and Bioterrorism

On November 15, Departmental Associates hosted a talk for supporters of the Medical College by Dr. Bruce Reidenberg, a research scientist at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and a visiting assistant professor of pharmacology and pediatrics at Weill Cornell Medical College. In his presentation, Dr. Reidenberg discussed how scientists are working to protect Americans from avian flu and terrorists who might use viruses as weapons.

The talk was held at the Sky Club, high atop the Met Life building, and resembled a classroom discussion much more than a formal lecture. Attendees, which included supporters of Departmental Associates, circled their chairs around a seated Dr. Reidenberg and he frequently paused to answer questions. Guests expressed concern over the avian virus and bioterrorism, and their anxiety seemed to rise and fall as Dr. Reidenberg discussed the craftiness of viruses, such as their possible mutation into drug-resistant strains; how terrorists might use viruses as weapons; and the advances that scientists are making in developing vaccines and antiviral drugs.

The event was hosted by William Gedale and his wife, Katie Brown, members of Departmental Associates, and chaired by Dr. Reidenberg's father, Dr. Marcus Reidenberg, professor of pharmacology, medicine, and public health at WMC. The elder Dr. Reidenberg began Departmental Associates in 1982 as an advocacy group that raises funds for research at the Medical College. Since its inception, the group has raised more than \$4 million.

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Awards & Honors

Dr. Antonio Gotto, the Stephen and Suzanne Weiss Dean of Weill Cornell Medical College and professor of medicine, presented the inaugural Antonio M. Gotto Jr., M.D. Symposium on the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease, sponsored by the Continuing Medical Education Resources and The Methodist Hospital in Houston, on October 8 in Houston. The symposium was established in Dr. Gotto's name to honor his leadership both nationally and internationally in the field of lipid chemistry and the role of lipoproteins in cholesterol metabolism to prevent heart disease. The inaugural meeting highlighted Dr. Gotto's initial research on cholesterol and its continued impact on emerging therapeutic targets. His lecture was on "The Role of LDL and ApoB Lipoproteins in Atherosclerosis and Cardiovascular Disease."

Dr. Jeffrey Laurence, professor of medicine, published an interview with former President Bill Clinton in the September issue of *AIDS Patient Care and STDs*, of which Dr. Laurence is editor-in-chief. Dr. Laurence was given special thanks for providing specific questions for the former president, who is also a subscriber to the journal.

Three major articles by **Weill Cornell faculty** are published in the December 1 edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine*: "Antiretroviral Therapy in a Thousand Patients with AIDS in Haiti" by **Dr. Daniel Fitzgerald, Dr. Jean Pape, Dr. Warren Johnson, Dr. Roy Gulick, Dr. Macarthur Charles** and **Dr. Erik George**; "Patent Foramen Ovale in Young Adults with Unexplained Stroke" by **Dr. Richard Devereux** and **Dr. Jorge Kizer**; and "Messenger RNA for FOXP3 in the Urine of Renal-Allograft Recipients" by **Dr. Manikkam Suthanthiran, Dr. Sandip Kapur, Dr. Surya Seshan, Dr. Vijay Sharma, Dr. Bao Gui Li, Dr. Jun B. Lee, Catherine Snopkowski, Dr. Ruchuang Ding, Dr. Darshana Dadhania** and **Dr. Thangamani Muthukumar**.

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