



NEWSLETTER



Department of Tropical Medicine, Medical Microbiology and Pharmacology

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Strengthening Collaborations in Liberia

In preparation for work to be conducted under a CDC-funded cooperative agreement, Drs. Axel Lehrer and John Berestecky visited Liberia from February 1-9, 2020. On arrival, they were first greeted by a very proactive public health response team at the airport measuring body temperature and requesting handwashing of each arriving passenger. Liberia has implemented similar procedures as used previously during the Ebola outbreak, so handwashing stations were also frequently seen at public offices and hotels in Monrovia.

The UH team had a tight schedule that included meetings with the two Liberian Co-PIs on more recently awarded CDC U01 grant, Dr. Mosoka Fallah (Acting Director General, National Public Health Institute of Liberia), Dr. Peter Humphrey (Assistant Director, Research Institute, University of Liberia), and Dr. James McClain (Dean of the Faulkner College of Science and Technology, University of Liberia), as well as University President Dr. Julius Nelson and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Moses Zinnah. Drs. Lehrer and Berestecky met also with the CDC Country Director, Dr. Desmond Williams, CDC Atlanta-based Global Health Epidemiologist Dr. Terrence Lo, and the Cooperative Agreement Specialist, Christine Dowie. In addition, numerous technical and administrative contacts were made to prepare for the issuance of sub-awards to Liberian institutions.



Left: Drs. Axel Lehrer and John Berestecky meet with Ebola survivors (NESNL).

Together with the Liberian colleagues, Drs. Lehrer and Berestecky visited the Liberia Institute for Biomedical Research and the PREVAIL laboratories to select suitable laboratory space for sample processing, storage and analysis. In addition, the team went for an onsite visit to the Mobile Laboratories installed in 2019 on the University of Liberia Fendall campus and discussed final details for the installation of a power generator and other electrical equipment. To become more familiar with the operations at the sample collection site. Epidemiologist Dr. Lo and the UH team visited Redemption Hospital in Monrovia where the CDC currently conducts sample collection for a survey of acute febrile illnesses in Liberia. In preparation for sample collection for the UH/CDC cooperative U01 agreement, the UH delegation also met with the president and other executive committee members of the National Ebola Survivor Network of Liberia (NESNL).

In addition to the project-specific visits and meetings, Drs. Lehrer and Berestecky attended a two-day networking and coordination workshop organized by the Global Infectious Disease program of the Fogarty International Center, NIH, together with PEER (Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research, USAID) and a two-day meeting organized by PREVAIL (Partnership for Research on Ebola Virus in Liberia). These meetings gave numerous opportunities to interact and network with African and U.S. colleagues working on projects in the West African region.

Northern Pacific Global Health (NPGH) Program

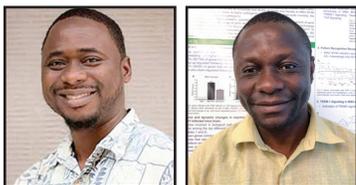


Photo: Dr. Esemu Livo (left) and Varney Kamara (right).

Dr. Esemu Livo, Cameroon and **Mr. Varney Kamara**, UHM were awarded the 2020 NPGH Fellowship and Scholarship, respectively. This one-year NPGH award will begin in summer 2020. In 2016, Dr. Livo conducted short-term research in our department, supported by the HIV Research Trust Scholarship, UK. As a NPGH Fellow, Dr. Livo will conduct research in Cameroon on latency-reversing agents on the inducible viral reservoir in CD4 T cells from virally suppressed HIV-positive women under the mentorship of Dr. Lishomwa Ndhlovu and Dr. Gabriel Loni. As a NPGH Scholar, **Mr. Varney Kamara** will conduct research in Liberia on seroprevalence of markers for Lassa virus infection in Liberia under the mentorship of Dr. Axel Lehrer and Dr. Mosoka Fallah.

Dr. Frederick DeWolfe Miller's Retirement Celebration

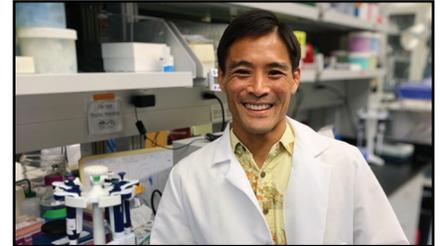
On January 27, 2020, faculty, staff, and students celebrated Dr. Miller's 35 years of dedication to the Department of Tropical Medicine, Medical Microbiology and Pharmacology. As an emeritus professor, you can still expect to see Dr. Miller at the JABSOM campus.



Congratulations to the Award Winners!

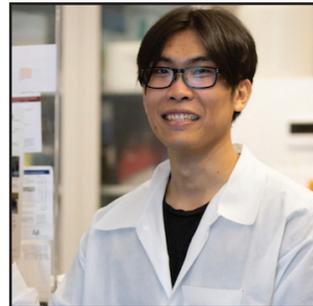
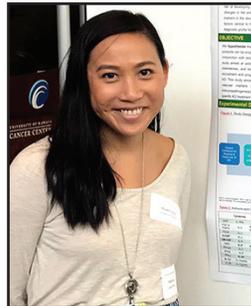
Windsor and Mary Cutting Award

Ms. Joanna Kettlewell and Dr. Brent Fujimoto are recipients of the Windsor and Mary Cutting Award. This award is given in honor of Windsor and Mary Cutting to perpetuate their lifelong memory and dedication to biomedical sciences research, specifically pharmacology, conducted at JABSOM. (Photos: Ms. Joanna Kettlewell (left); Dr. Brent Fujimoto (right), photo by Geetika Patwardhan.)



Dr. Virginia Hinshaw Endowed Scholarship

Three students were awarded Dr. Virginia Hinshaw Endowed Scholarships. Congratulations to Ms. Lauren Ching, Mr. Albert To, and Mr. Daniel Strange II. This scholarship award was established as a lasting legacy to Dr. Hinshaw who was chancellor of UH Manoa. (Photos (below) from left to right: Ms. Lauren Ching, Mr. Albert To, Mr. Daniel Strange II).



Vietnamese Scientist Visits Pacific Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases Research, JABSOM

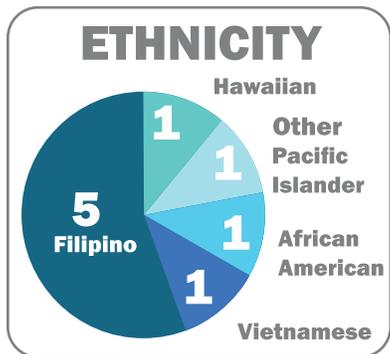
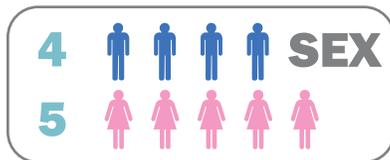
Dr. Dao Huy Manh, Ph.D., Researcher, Department of Microbiology and Immunology Pasteur Institute Ho Chi Minh City (PI-HCMC), Viet Nam visited Dr. Wei-Kung Wang's laboratory in the Department of Tropical Medicine, Medical Microbiology and Pharmacology for 2 weeks in January 2020 to learn the principles and practical skills of an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay, which utilize non-structural protein 1 to distinguish Zika and dengue virus infections, two most important arboviruses of public health concern. The goals are to establish such serological test at the PI-HCMC to investigate the 2016-17 Zika virus outbreak in southern Viet Nam in the short-term and to improve arbovirus diagnostics and surveillance in the country and enhance global health preparedness for arbovirus outbreak and control. This training and research project will facilitate continuous collaboration between UH and PI-HCMC to fulfill one of JABSOM's missions to pursue alliances unique to Hawaii and the Asia-Pacific region.



Photo: Dr. Dao Huy Manh, Dr. Richard Yanagihara, Dr. Wei-Kung Wang and his team.

MHRT 2020

NIH-funded Minority Health Research Training (MHRT) program was renewed for another five years and selected its seventh cohort of students, including its first out-of-state student and students from a variety of basic, health, and social sciences majors.



New Faces at the Department of Tropical Medicine, Medical Microbiology and Pharmacology



Dr. Angela Sy, Assistant Professor, transferred to our department from the Department of Pediatrics. She conducts community based participatory research (CBPR) and program evaluation with a focus on priority public health issues among Asian and Pacific Islander communities. She has taught research and community

health courses including research methods, CBPR, qualitative methods, program evaluation, and needs assessment. She is the Program Administrator and Evaluator of the MHRT program and Evaluator of the Pacific Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases Research supported by the NIH funded COBRE. She also serves as a co-investigator of the U24 Indigenous Samoan Partnership to Initiate Research Excellence program. As a faculty member of the UH Undergraduate Honor's program since 2015, she teaches Senior Honors Thesis Proposal (Introduction to Research Methods), HON495.



Varney Kamara is the Director of the Central Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, Ministry of Agriculture in Liberia, lecturer at the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Liberia, and Coordinator of the Laboratory Technical Working Group under the One Health Platform in Liberia. He received his M.Sc. degree in Microbiology and Biochemistry from Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana, India in 2015. His previous research expertise includes investigation and publication on the antifungal activity of terrestrial bacteria against phytopathogenic fungi. In 2017, he completed a Veterinary Technology program at the National Institute of Animal Health (NIAH) in Tsukuba, Japan, where he focused primarily on the epidemiology of the porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome virus (PRRS) and the use of serological and molecular techniques for detection of pathogens. Currently, he is a PhD student in the Tropical Medicine program at John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawaii and is serving as a Graduate Research Assistant.



Olivia Smith is a new PhD student working with Dr. Axel Lehrer. She received her undergraduate degree in Neuroscience from the University of Vermont, and her Masters in Public Health in Epidemiology from the University of Massachusetts Lowell, close to where she grew up. She was also a Peace Corps Volunteer and served in the beautiful and diverse country of Peru. She has a passion for global health, infectious disease, tropical medicine research, and is excited to be joining a great team, working on Ebola virus vaccine research.

One Health Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Certificate Program

A core team of faculty from JABSOM, OPHS/MBTSSW, PBRC/SOEST and CTAHR, under the leadership of Dr. Richard Yanagihara, has been awarded funding from the 2019–2020 Strategic Investment Competition for High-Impact Practices in Undergraduate Education to develop a One Health Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Certificate Program at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa to better integrate top faculty and researchers into the undergraduate experience.

