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ASIP Representatives Participate in Translational Research Forum at Howard Hughes Medical Institute

In early 2010, FASEB's Clinical Research Committee formed a **Translational Research Steering Committee** to focus on creating a national forum of leaders to discuss the role of basic scientists in the translational research enterprise. An agenda was developed and speakers were selected and invited over the course of 2010 for the Forum that was held on March 24 and 25, 2011 at the Bethesda campus of HHMI. Participants in the Steering Committee could not have foreseen just how timely and relevant the Translational Research Forum would be, with the simultaneous development of the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences at NIH.

The Steering Committee recognized there is widespread interest in accelerating the pace at which basic research discoveries are translated into improved medical care. Lack of effective, systematic collaboration among basic, clinical, and translational researchers is frequently cited as one of the obstacles to moving promising discoveries from the bench to the bedside. Although there have been numerous initiatives aimed at addressing this concern, few have specifically focused on the importance of engaging basic scientists. The Forum's specific goal was to address the critical role that basic researchers play in translation, to examine approaches to increasing the participation of basic scientists, particularly those at an early career stage, and to explore new ways to foster collaboration among researchers working at all points along the bench-to-bedside continuum.

The Steering Committee, with assistance from FASEB society leaders, invited a select group of ~150 participants, including guest speakers, association members and staff, who they believed would make valuable contributions and facilitate the discussions. ASIP had substantial and broad representation from members: **Stanley Cohen, MD** (Chair of the Department of Pathology at UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School), **James M. Crawford, MD PhD** (Senior Vice President and Chair of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System Laboratories), **Mary JC. Hendrix, PhD** (President and Scientific Director of the Children's Memorial Research Center), **James Mallory Musser, MD PhD** (Chair of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at The Methodist Hospital System), **John A. Smith, MD PhD** (Director of the Division of Laboratory Medicine at the University of Alabama, Birmingham), and **Mark L. Tykocinski, MD** (Dean of the Jefferson Medical College). **Mark E. Sobel, MD PhD**, Executive Director, and staff member **Priscilla Markwood** also attended on behalf of ASIP.

Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health, gave the keynote talk, providing a comprehensive but concise overview of the phases of translating basic scientific discoveries into therapeutics and therapeutics into improved medical care. Other sessions focused on: 1)



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the role of basic researchers in translation, highlighting examples of good and poor cooperation among basics, clinical, and translational researchers, which led to or inhibited breakthroughs; 2) a review of current initiatives aimed at increasing basic scientists' engagement in translational research, including training and education, institutional incentives, and funding opportunities; and 3) new approaches to fostering collaboration between basic and applied scientists, with the goal of identifying specific, actionable policy recommendations aimed at increasing basic science engagement in translational research. These primary topics were addressed through expert panels, break-out sessions and table discussions. Questions from the audience were encouraged and well-addressed.

In the end, attention centered on several issues: 1) individually, how to 'spark' the interest of basic researchers into studying human disease pathobiology; 2) locally, how to incentivize inter-departmental cooperation and engagement in translational research; and 3) nationally, how to better characterize funding opportunities and evaluate grant applications to fit translational research paradigms. Understandably, the 2-day Forum only scratched the surface of inquiry into these challenging and complex issues. However, the Steering Committee is now in the process of reviewing the transcripts of the meeting and devising a white paper, which they hope will enable stakeholder communities to take this critical dialogue steps further. The white paper will be published in fall 2011.

In general, the reaction of ASIP member participants to the Forum was a realization that our members, having occupied the human disease research 'space' far longer, have to some degree addressed many of the obstacles still being evaluated by other basic sciences. In that sense, ASIP can play a key role in enabling more translational research, and educating and facilitating the careers of basic scientists interested in pursuing these options. **James Mallory Musser, MD PhD**, Vice President-Elect of ASIP and member of ASIP's Public Affairs Working Group, is currently drafting an editorial on pathology's role in translational research and ASIP's unique perspective on related issues. Look for the editorial in a fall issue of *The American Journal of Pathology*

If you would like to contribute your thoughts on pathology's role in translational research to Dr. Musser's editorial, to the ASIP Public Affairs Working Group, or to the FASEB Translational Research Steering Committee, please contact Priscilla Markwood at pmarkwood@asip.org or 301-634-7408.

This article can be seen in ASIP Pathways June 2011

<http://www.asip.org/publications/newsletter/documents/ASIPPathwaysJune2011.pdf>