



“ΑΡΙΣΤΕΙΑ”

The e-Newsletter of the Graduate Program
“Molecular Basis of Human Disease”
University of Crete, School of Medicine
<http://molmedgp.med.uoc.gr>

Issue 6

July 2010

Inside this issue:

-Editorial

- Completion of the Internal and external evaluation of the Medical School of Crete: a milestone and a starting point

- Second Retreat

-Meet our faculty

-Meet our students

-Research activities

-Research grants

-Graduate Program News

- Meetings

- Awards - Distinctions - Promotions

- Visitors from abroad

- Graduation ceremonies

Editorial Board

Editors:

Dimitris Kardassis, PhD
Dimitris Boumpas, MD/PhD

Associate Editors:

Aris Eliopoulos, PhD
Helen Papadaki, MD/PhD
Christos Tsatsanis, PhD
Vanna Zachariou, PhD

Editorial

by *Dimitris Kardassis and Dimitrios Boumpas*

This editorial will highlight two important milestones during this past semester. First the external evaluation of the medical school and second the completion of the first academic year since the curriculum reformed last summer.

External evaluation. Last April our Medical School completed the process of Internal Evaluation. This process started almost three years ago and ended with the site visit of the external evaluation committee and the publication of its recommendations.

Having the opportunity to participate actively in the evaluation as members of the Internal Self Evaluation Team (OMEA), we both feel that this was a useful exercise for the school in general and for our graduate program as it gave us the opportunity, to see our strengths and weaknesses but also to document our accomplishments. To this end, we are indebted to the external evaluation committee for their time and wisdom. Unfortunately, the site visit was short and the time available to the committee very limited. In view of this, the committee decided to focus its attention

more into the undergraduate studies. Thus, a thorough evaluation of our program side by side with the other programs of our School was not possible. For the future we hope that the external evaluation committee will have the opportunity to allocate more time into a comprehensive review of your graduate program. To highlight this important milestone in the history of the school we asked Professor Emeritus V. I. Zannis who was involved from the early stages in the external evaluation at the national level to share with us his insights on the process and to put it in the context of efforts to improve graduate education in Europe.

Curriculum update. Last year we felt that our curriculum should change and adjust to the needs of modern biomedical education and research. Our courses became more modular, focusing on diseases (metabolic, inflammatory, neuropsychiatric etc) rather than research areas thus taking full advantage of the expertise of existing faculty. Certain topics were covered by external collaborators. We believe that the “experiment” worked and the responses of the students were positive. Some adjustments could be made but we have a strong feedback that the new curriculum best fits the needs of our students. Nevertheless this issue will be more thoroughly discussed in the

upcoming retreat of the program on October 24, 2010. We are thankful to George Goulielmos for having accepted the responsibility to coordinate this. A preliminary program of the retreat is presented elsewhere in this issue.

* * *

Completion of the Internal and external evaluation of the Medical School of Crete: a milestone and a starting point
by Vassilis I. Zannis

Background. The concept of uniformity and quality in higher education across the European Union was born out by the Bologna Declaration of the European education ministers in June 19, 1999. To implement these policies, national quality assurance agencies (QAAs) were created in each European country in order to implement the evaluations of the European universities.

On August 2, 2005 the law governing the creation and the framework of operation of Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (ADIP) was published in the government gazette. ADIP consists of 15 members; six of them are university professors and its mission is to organize and oversee the periodic evaluations of the Greek institutes of higher education (AEI). Based on guidelines formulated by ADIP, each department collects information and writes an objective internal evaluation report emphasizing its mission, accomplishments, strengths, weaknesses and its needs and

vision for the future. ADIP then selects an external evaluation committee of distinguished Greek scientists from abroad that reads the internal evaluation report, visits the department and writes its external evaluation report. The external evaluation report, via ADIP, reaches the relevant government branches to help them formulate the national policy on higher education.

History of the evaluation process. I had the privilege of being a founding member of ADIP as a representative of the health sciences from September, 2006 to December, 2007. The challenge we faced from the onset in ADIP was how to formulate the guidelines for evaluation of different departments, particularly medical schools, and how to convince the administration and the students of the Greek AEI on the merits of the evaluation. At the national level the opposition appeared overwhelming but in Crete we were fortunate.

On October 30, 2006 the president of ADIP, Spyros Amourgis, visited Crete and we met with the rector and chairs of various departments. This visit and subsequent discussion reinforced the concept that the evaluation must go on immediately. The rumored student opposition at least in the medical school appeared exaggerated. The student president of that period (Maria Manousaki), once informed properly offered to be the student representative for the internal evaluation committee (OMEA). On March 20, 2007 the President of the Medical School,

Panagiotis Vardas passed a decision in the general assembly to proceed with the evaluation. In October, 2007 the new president, Odysseas Zoras adopted warmly the concept of evaluation. The members of OMEA were chosen in October, 2007 by the general assembly and included Andreas Plaitakis (as president), Dimitris Boumpas, Dimitris Kardassis, Dimitris Georgopoulos, Dimitris Mavroudis, Anastasios Filalithis, Andreas Margioris, Grigoris Chlouverakis and a student representative (M. Magarakis) as members. Emmanouela Xenikaki, who had helped earlier to create the templates for evaluation of the medical school based on models of The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME), was appointed to serve as the secretary. Achilleas Gravanis, who was chosen to succeed me in ADIP in January, 2008 preserved all the knowledge and experience acquired in the preceding 15 months.

Thus all the pieces were in place and the work started in earnest. The target was to collect the information complete the internal evaluation report and submit it to ADIP by July, 2008 and have the external evaluation team visit the school in the fall of 2008 or the spring of 2009. Through hard and painful work the mission was accomplished on time. An impressive internal evaluation report was written. It describes the history of the medical school its mission, the undergraduate and the graduate curriculum, teaching, research, infrastructure, the administration, the relationship of the medical school with the society, strategic plans for the

future, proposals for improvement and conclusions.

With much delay (1.5 years after submission of the internal evaluation report) on March 15-17, 2010 a team of experts from the US and Europe carried out the external evaluation of the medical school. The team consisted of: Professor Haralampos Gavras, Boston University, USA; Professor Nikandros Bouras, University of London, King's College, UK; Professor Charalabos Pothoulakis, University of California, Los Angeles, CA; and Professor George Kitas, University of Manchester and University of Birmingham, UK. The external evaluators visited clinical and few basic departments, talked to faculty, students and the administration. Their report affirmed most of the findings of the internal evaluation report and made positive recommendations for improvement. The visit was short (2.5 days) and there was practically no time left for thorough evaluation of the graduate programs and the multitude of documents that were displayed as appendices that contained additional information how the medical school operates. Fortunately the OMEA report contained external evaluation reports of all the graduate programs that highlight their merits and thus supplements the external evaluation report. The internal and external evaluation reports can be found in http://www.med.uoc.gr/pdf/External_Evaluation_Report.pdf

Myths and reality regarding the Bologna and the objectives

of the evaluation of the Greek AEI. The initial opposition for the evaluation of the Greek AEI voiced by a percentage of the student body and some members of the academic community was based on unsubstantiated arguments. Bologna according to the rumors represented a form of conspiracy designed to abolish public free education infringe on academic freedoms, and generate narrowly educated graduates to serve the needs of the market economy. In the same line of thinking the external evaluators were nothing more than paid agents to implement this policy.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact it was clarified in the declaration that "The Bologna objectives of 1999 should be attained by different institutions and countries with full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and taking into account the autonomy of the university." The Bologna declaration thus affirmed the central role of the universities in the implementation of the proposed reforms and in shaping their own European future. Countries were free to select 3 or 4 years bachelor cycle and the basic degree could be reinforced with supplementary credits and lifelong education.

Furthermore, in order to find the most qualified and impartial list of external evaluators ADIP searched and compiled a list of the top Greek scientists working abroad. The potential evaluators are then drawn from this list and are asked to donate a week of their precious time for the

benefit of the Greek higher education.

Conclusions: The internal and external evaluation reports produced are snapshots and a mirror on how the medical school looks today. They present what are the positive elements that must be supported and reinforced and what are the weaknesses that need to be corrected. They are also a forum that projects our needs and our aspirations for the future for growth and improvement. It charts the path for creation of a quality culture that has its roots in our classical heritage "Γνώθι σ' εαυτόν και αβεν αριστεύειν." The vision is how all of us collectively maximize our strengths and correct our weaknesses in order to make a better medical school for the future generations.

The evaluation report that is based on European quality standards provides an identity to the students and the graduates of the medical school and opens the doors for training and/or career opportunities in Europe and the US.

The evaluation of the Greek AEI and the broader goals of the Bologna are not to enslave but to improve the universities, uplift the students and allow them to be the best they can be within a united Europe. Being the best will allow them to fully realize their potential succeed in life and pay back their dues to the society that provided them with free education.

* * *

Second Retreat, Graduate Studies Amphitheater, Medical School, Saturday October 23, 2010

by George N Goulielmos

On October of 2007, the Graduate Program “Molecular Basis of Human Disease” held its 1st Scientific Retreat at the “Kalimera Kriti Resort” in Sissi . This coupled with its 1st external evaluation completed three years ago, represented a major milestone in the life of the Graduate Program. The Retreat was attended by approximately 90 faculty and members, and included special lectures by invited speakers and faculty of the Program as well as presentations from the graduate students.

This year, the graduate Program organizes its 2nd Scientific Retreat that will be held in the Campus of Medical School of Crete on Saturday, October 23rd.

In view of the restructuring of the curriculum one year ago, the scientific program of the retreat will be organized around the major diseases of the program (metabolic, infectious, inflammatory, malignant, neuropsychiatric etc). The second Retreat will be based mostly on oral and poster presentations from the graduate students, including those that work in laboratories outside Crete or Greece. Each session will include short introductory comments from one senior investigator followed by short (10 min) presentations of graduate students. Students will have the opportunity to present their work under “real conference” conditions, meet

with the faculty and be introduced in the research conducted by the various groups of the program.

In order to put the program together current students who are completing their Master or PhD theses are asked to send to Ms Adamaki an abstract from their work. Following this, there will be a selection of abstracts for oral presentations. All abstracts will also be displayed in posters. Students that will be abroad at the time of the retreat can submit their posters electronically. These posters will be printed by the Program and displayed at the area of the Retreat.

* * *

Meet Our Faculty

by Dimitris Kardassis



Dr Evangelia Papakonstanti

Dr Evangelia (Litsa) Papakonstanti received a BSc degree in Chemistry from the University of Crete, and a PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Crete Medical School working in the laboratory of Biochemistry under the supervision of Prof. C. Stournaras. She continued working at the Medical School of Crete for 3.5 years as a post-doctoral fellow. In 2003, she moved to London as post-doctoral fellow and soon was appointed senior researcher at

Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research (Cell Signalling in Cancer Group)-University College of London. In 2007 she moved to Greece as Lecturer at the Department of Basic Sciences of the Medical School, University of Crete.

Her current work has been concentrated on the molecular mechanisms underlying cell migration and cell survival in cancer and immune disorders, with focus on the pathways regulated by PI3 kinase-isoforms and small GTPases (e.g. Papakonstanti et al., EMBO J 2007, Eickholt et al., PLoS ONE 2007, Papakonstanti et al., J Cell Science 2008) aiming to gain important information for the development of promising drugs targeting specific molecules and cell functions (e.g. Zwaenepoel et al., 2010, Tzenaki et al., 2010). Towards these goals a wide variety of basic cell biology and imaging techniques are applied together with unique genetically modified mice and novel inhibitors, specific for each PI3 kinase isoform.

Her work is published in prestigious journals including EMBO J, PLoS ONE, MBC, FASEB J and others. She has been participating in multiple scientific societies (e.g. Migration and Inflammation-Network of Excellence, Biochemical Society, UK etc). Furthermore, she serves as a reviewer for 7 different international scientific journals.

* * *

Meet our students

by Vanna Zachariou



*Chrysa Delligiani,
2nd year PhD student
(Spilianakis lab)*

Chrysa Deligianni grew up in Nafplio, and moved to Heraklion at the age of 18 to attend the UOC Biology School.

Q: Was Biology your first choice?

A: Yes, UOC Biology was my first choice. I was interested in molecular biology, which is the main reason I selected the particular department. These are choices we have to make at the age of 17, which is tough. I heard that the new educational system gives students the opportunity to choose fields after their second year of studies.

Q: When did you start working in a research lab?

A: I started during my sophomore year. My first project was related to signal transduction mechanisms (Dr Papamatheakis lab), and it was part of the Laboratory Practice course. This is a two month course, but I was able to extend it to six months, and during this time I got exposed to several molecular biology and cell culture techniques. The following year I worked in Dr Kretsovali's lab in a project related to stem cell

function. By then I was 100% sure I wanted to follow the research path and I decided to join a graduate program with a focus on Medicine/Molecular Biology.

Q: This is your second year in graduate school; how do you find the course curriculum?

A: Compared to undergraduate studies, the courses now are more focused and, of course, there is a big load of study material, covering a wide range of human disorders. I enjoy the fact that our study material is mostly papers, which we analyze and criticize. I've completed my two lab rotations and I recently joined Dr Spilianakis lab, to work on a project that utilizes Fluorescence in Situ Hybridization approaches to study the mode of regulation of the Interferon gamma receptor from the interferon gamma gene locus. It appears to exist a physical interaction between the two gene loci, and our data suggest that interferon gamma regulatory elements modulate the expression of its receptor. Interferon gamma and its receptor are found on mouse chromosome 11 but not in close proximity. However, they are regulated by the same genetic elements. This is quite novel, and important in order to shed light in the mechanisms regulating the adaptive immune system. Deregulation of this system is associated with cancer and autoimmune disorders.

Q: I know you are a hard working student, spending long hours in the lab. Any hobbies?

A: I enjoy playing keyboards and guitar. I do not have the time

for concerts, but I still play when I get together with friends, or when I want to relax. I also enjoy swimming and other sports.

* * *

Research Activities

by Aris Eliopoulos and Helen Papadaki

Tpl2 kinase in lung inflammation. The protein kinase Tpl2 is emerging as an important regulator of inflammation. A paper published in the Journal of Immunology by an international team that includes our Post-graduate Program faculty Chris Tsatsanis and Aris Eliopoulos shows that Tpl2 is a negative regulator of lung inflammation. The authors used a mouse model of allergen-induced bronchoalveolar inflammation and found that Tpl2 ablation results in severe asthma-like phenotype. Tpl2 deficiency gives rise to a T cell-intrinsic defect in T-helper (Th) cell differentiation that favours Th2 polarisation, leading to significant increase in IgE levels and exaggerated inflammation. [*J Immunol.* 184(1):105-13, 2010].

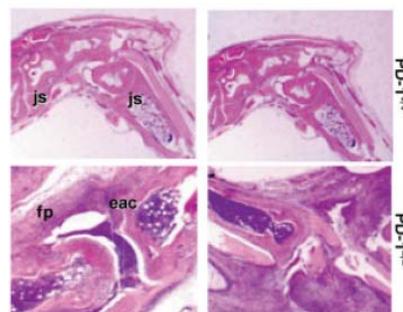
Drug reward and analgesia. Regulator of G protein signaling 4 (RGS4) levels in neuronal networks may influence actions of opiates and other drugs of abuse, but the consequences of RGS4 actions in vivo have been largely unknown. An international team led by Vanna Zachariou used constitutive and nucleus accumbens-inducible RGS4 knockout mice as well as mice overexpressing RGS4 in the

nucleus accumbens via viral mediated gene transfer, to examine the influence of RGS4 on behavioral responses to opiates. They found that in this brain region, RGS4 acts as a negative regulator of morphine reward, whereas in the locus coeruleus RGS4 opposes morphine physical dependence. In contrast, RGS4 does not affect morphine analgesia or tolerance but is a positive modulator of certain opiate analgesics, such as methadone and fentanyl. These findings provide fundamentally novel information concerning the role of RGS4 in the cellular mechanisms underlying the diverse actions of opiate drugs in the nervous system. [*Biol Psychiatry* 67(8):761-9, 2010].

Glucocorticoid in cholesterol transport. Scavenger receptor class B type I (SR-BI) facilitates the reverse transport of excess cholesterol from peripheral tissues to the liver via high-density lipoproteins. A paper in *Endocrinology* by the teams of Dimitris Kardassis, Maria Venihaki and Chris Tsatsanis shows that the transcription of the human SR-BI gene is subject to feedback inhibition by glucocorticoid. SR-BI mRNA levels were found increased in adrenals from corticosterone-insufficient mice, whereas corticosterone replacement by oral administration inhibited SR-BI gene expression in these animals. Analysis of the promoter sequences of SR-BI identified a region containing putative binding sites for transcriptional repressors that could play a role in SR-BI gene regulation in response to glucocorticoid. This is the first

report showing that glucocorticoid suppress SR-BI expression suggesting that steroidogenic tissues maintain steroid hormone homeostasis by prohibiting SR-BI-mediated high-density lipoprotein cholesterol uptake when the endogenous levels of glucocorticoid are elevated. Our graduate program student, Sophia Mavridou is first author in this publication. [*Endocrinology* 151(7):3214-24, 2010].

The role of PD-1 /PDL-1 pathway in the regulation of human and murine Rheumatoid Arthritis. The programmed death 1 (PD-1)/programmed death ligand 1 (PDL-1) pathway is involved in peripheral tolerance through inhibition of T cells at the level of synovial tissue. Amalia Raptopoulou and George Bertsiias from the Lab of Dr Dimitrios Boumpas have shown that synovial tissue and synovial fluid (SF) from patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) were enriched with PD-1+ T cells and PDL-1+ monocyte/macrophages.



PD-1 crosslinking inhibited both peripheral blood (PB) T cell proliferation and production of interferon- γ (IFN γ) in RA patients. *PD-1*^{-/-} mice demonstrated increased incidence of collagen-induced arthritis (CIA) and greater severity of CIA, and this was

associated with enhanced T cell proliferation and increased production of cytokines (IFN γ and interleukin-17) in response to type II collagen. PDL-1.Fc treatment ameliorated the severity of CIA and reduced T cell responses. These data indicate that the negative costimulatory PD-1/PDL-1 pathway regulates peripheral T cell responses in both human and murine RA. Furthermore, PD-1/PDL-1 in rheumatoid synovium may represent an additional target for immunomodulatory therapy in RA. [*Arthritis Rheum.* 2010 Apr 6;62(7):1870-1880]

Novel role of plasmacytoid dendritic cells in humans: Contribution to the development of Treg cells in patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis. Dendritic cells (DCs) likely play a central role in regulating immune tolerance via the expansion and/or induction of Treg cells. Melina Kavousanaki from Dr Dimitrios Boumpas' Lab investigated, under the supervision of Dr Panos Verginis, this hypothesis in rheumatoid arthritis (RA) patients and found that only very low numbers of both plasmacytoid DCs and myeloid DCs were present in the peripheral blood of patients with active RA, in contrast to patients with therapy-induced remission of RA who exhibited higher numbers of circulating plasmacytoid DCs. Mature plasmacytoid DCs from RA patients with low disease activity, in contrast to healthy subjects, expressed high levels of indoleamine 2,3-dioxygenase and promoted in coculture experiments the differentiation of allogeneic naive CD4+CD25- T cells into interleukin-10-

secreting Treg cells, or Tr1 cells, that showed poor proliferation in vitro. Furthermore, these Treg cells potently suppressed the proliferation of autologous naive CD4⁺ T cells, in a dose-dependent manner. Overall, these results demonstrate, for the first time, that human plasmacytoid DCs may be educated within the rheumatoid microenvironment to acquire a tolerogenic phenotype. Modulation of the immune response by plasmacytoid DCs might provide novel immune-based therapies in autoimmunity and transplantation. [*Arthritis Rheum.* 2010 Jan;62(1):53-63]

Investigation of bone marrow mesenchymal stem cells involvement in idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. To probe the possible involvement of BM mesenchymal stem cells (BM MSCs) in the pathophysiology of Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF) Katerina Antoniou from the Department of Thoracic Medicine, in collaboration with the Clinical Virology and the Haemopoiesis Research Lab, studied 10 IPF patients and 10 healthy controls. Based on their immunophenotypic characteristics and their potential to differentiate towards adipocytes/ osteocytes/ chondrocytes, BM MSCs from IPF patients were identified but were found to display a normal profile compared to the healthy controls. Furthermore, mRNA expression of vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), fibroblast growth factor (FGF) and transforming growth factor beta-1 (TGFβ1), which are involved in the lung injury of IPF, displayed no statistically significant difference between

the 2 groups. However, a significant increase in the mRNA expression of the stromal-cell-derived factor-1 receptor (SDF-1-TR1 and CXCR4) was detected in IPF patients compared to controls whereas SDF-1 levels in MSC supernatants were similar in the 2 groups. Overall, the increased CXCR4 expression by patient MSCs suggests that the BM is probably implicated in the pathophysiology of IPF by mobilizing MSCs in response to or preceding lung injury. [*J Recept Signal Transduct Res.* 2010 Jun 10]



Photo from the first MC meeting of COST Action BM0904 in Brussels, June 8 2010

* * *

Research grants

by Dimitris Kardassis

* On June 8, 2010 the kick off meeting of the COST Action BM0904 entitled: "HDL: from biological understanding to clinical exploitation" took place at the COST headquarters in Brussels. Delegations from 10 European countries participated in this meeting that officially launched the program. The representatives from Greece were Dr Dimitris Kardassis (U. of Crete/IMBB-FORTH) and Dr Angelika Chroni (NCSR - Demokritos, Athens). During this meeting, Dr Dimitris Kardassis was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Action and of the Management Committee (MC). It was decided that the first scientific meeting of the Working Groups will take place in Athens at the beginning of next year.

* Prof. M. Kokkinidis received a grant from GSRT for the optimization of the Use Of The European X-Fel By The Greek Research Community, € 125.000

* Dr. M. Kokkinidis received a grant from GSRT in the context of the Bilateral Collaboration on Research and Technology between Greece and France to study: "Bacterial Type III Secretion Systems: Study of Supramolecular Structures" 2010 - 2011 (EGIDE)

* Dr George Sourvinos was awarded a UICC Yamagiwa-Yoshida Memorial International Cancer Study Grant by the International Union Against Cancer to study the "Regulation of Human Cytomegalovirus (HCMV) infection by the histone H3 demethylase Not dead yet-1 (Ndy1/KDM2B)".

* Dr. V. Zachariou received a grant from GSRT in the context of the Bilateral Collaboration on Research and Technology between Greece and France entitled: "Neuropathic pain and its treatments: New models and Epigenetic mechanisms".

* Dr. Christos C. Zouboulis received a European Union FP7 project LSH- HEALTH-2007-A

entitled: “WhyWeAge—A road map for European ageing research” (2009-2011)

* * *

Graduate Program News

by Dimitris Kardassis

Meetings

* 35th FEBS Congress in Gothenburg, June 26-July 1, 2010



The 35th FEBS Congress, Molecules of Life, was held in the Swedish Exhibition & Congress Centre of Gothenburg in June 26-July 1, 2010.

The opening lecture was given by Sir Roger Tsien from the University of California San Diego entitled “Breeding and building molecules to spy on cells and tumors”. Other plenary lectures included: the IUBMB lecture by Prof. Susan Lindquist, the EMBO plenary lecture by Prof. Uri Alon, the Krebs Medal Lecture by Prof. Harald Stenmark, the Bucher plenary lecture by Prof. Svante Paabo and the Nobel Laureate Lectures by Elizabeth Blackburn, John Walker and Venki Ramakrishnan.

The congress covered a large variety of research topics ranging from gene regulation, signal transduction, regulation of protein function and metabolic networks to biological cycles, membrane transport and energy transduction, to secretory

pathways and endocytosis, to ageing, molecular immunology, metabolic diseases and neurobiology, to biomolecular design and function. There were also many technology workshops on topics such as life cell imaging, bioinformatics, molecular imaging, network modeling and proteomics technologies and a special lecture by Prof Uri Alon (and his guitar) on the importance of Emotional and Subjective Sides of Science. The graduate student of our program Ioanna Mosialou (Kardassis lab) presented her work on the role of orphan and ligand-dependent nuclear receptors in the regulation of human apolipoprotein M gene in the liver that encodes for a quite novel apolipoprotein participating in the metabolism of HDL. In the same meeting, Elsa Papadimitriou (Stournaras lab) presented her most recent findings on the regulation of NET1 (RhoA-specific GEF) by TGFβ.

* 15th Congress of the European Hematology Association, Barcelona, June 10-13 2010



Konstantia Pavlaki, our graduate student from Dr Papadaki's lab, presented her work on telomere length in CIN patients, as an oral presentation in the 15th Congress of the European Hematology Association in Barcelona, June 10-13. Telomeres are specialized DNA-protein structures that protect chromosomes' end. Their length has been associated with

the number of cell divisions in vitro and aging in vivo. Abnormal telomere shortening has been already described in patients with bone marrow acquired syndromes. Konstantia observed an inappropriate telomere loss of peripheral blood mononuclear cells in CIN patients compared to healthy individuals. The increased activation of peripheral blood T-lymphocytes previously described in patients with CIN might modulate the decrease of telomere length in the patients.



Konstantia Pavlaki presenting her work at the 15th Congress of the European Hematology Association in Barcelona.

* 11th Annual Congress of the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR), Rome, June 16-19 2010.



The 11th annual Congress of the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) took place this year in Rome on June 16th-19th. It was an outstanding Meeting with more than 15000 participants. At the opening ceremony, Elias Stagakis (M.D.) from our Graduate Program presented his work “Aberrant T

cell responses in human Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) are regulated by mir-21 and its target gene PDCD4". He showed that miR-21 regulates key signaling pathways in T lymphocytes that mediate B-cell hyperresponsiveness in Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, and thus may represent a potential therapeutic target in this disease. In his examination of 25 differently expressed miRNA, miR-21 was the highest up-regulated miRNA in SLE patients, compared with healthy individuals, and correlated strongly with lupus disease activity.

* Summer School in Inflammation and Cancer

The *1st Inflammation & Cancer Summer School* aims to stimulate research in inflammatory pathways associated with cancer by improving scientific knowledge and developing skills among young researchers. This educational activity is organised by INFLA-CARE, a 4-year research initiative funded by the European Commission and coordinated by our Program faculty Aris Eliopoulos. INFLA-CARE welcomes graduate students, clinicians and scientists to this summer school where participants have the unique opportunity to engage in scientific learning with some of the world's experts in the field of inflammation and cancer. The meeting will take place in Fodele, Crete, between 28-30 October 2010. For more information and registration, please visit our web site

<http://www.inflacare2010.gr>

* *

Awards - Distinctions - Promotions

* Professor Panagiotis Vardas was elected President of the European Cardiology Society

* Professor Dimitris Boumpas was elected Chairman of Education and Training Committee of the European League Against Rheumatology (EULAR)

* Dr Nektarios Tavernarakis was elected Full Professor of Molecular/Systems Biology at the Division of Basic Sciences of the University of Crete Medical School on June 24, 2010

* Assoc. Professor Dimitris Kardassis was promoted to Full Professor of Biochemistry on April 20, 2010

* Graduate student Elias Stagakis was honoured with a basic science award for his work "Aberrant T cell responses in human Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) are regulated by mir-21 and its target gene PDCD4" that he presented during the EULAR 2010 meeting in Rome and received a prize of 1,000 €



Elias Stagakis (first from left) receiving his Basic Science Abstract Award from EULAR President Pro. Paul Emery

* Dr J. Moschandreas received a Fulbright Research Scholar award to undertake two months of research at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, U.S.A

* *

Visitors from abroad

This semester, our visitors from abroad included:

* In Graduate Course MM107: "Malignant Diseases", Dr T. Liloglou, University of Liverpool, Cancer Research Center

* In Graduate Course MM109: "Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cells", Dr Luc Sensebe and Dr Charlampos Pontikoglou, Establishment Francais du Sang Centre-Atlantique, Groupe de Recherche sur les Cellules Souches Mesenchymaleuses (GECSoFM), Tours, France

* *

Graduation ceremonies

* The *2010 Spring graduation ceremonies* (for MSc and PhD graduates only) took place on Monday, March 23rd 2010 at the Main Auditorium of the New Building for Graduate studies. Among the MSc graduates was Antonis Fanouriakis of our program and we would like to congratulate him, his supervisor and his family for this accomplishment.

* The *2010 Summer graduation ceremonies* of our Medical School (for both medical and graduate students) took place on Tuesday, July 20th 2010 at the front-entrance auditorium of the Medical School. The keynote talk

was delivered by Prof. G. Kaminis, Professor of Constitutional Law, University of Athens and Ombudsman of Greece. His lecture was entitled: “*The Ombudsman faced with the problems of the Health Sector*” The ceremonies were attended by Medical School faculty, local authorities, students and their families.

On behalf of our graduate program, we would like to congratulate our MSc and doctoral graduates who completed their degree requirements and were awarded their diplomas: Sofia Mavridou (PhD), Eleftheria Ieronimaki (MSc), Marina-Eleni Mela (MSc), Konstantina Georgila (MSc), Anna Vardi (MSc), Joseph Pediaditakis (MSc) and Ioannis Liapis (MSc).



Marina-Eleni Mela, Eleftheria Ieronimaki and Konstantina Georgila at the graduation ceremonies

* * *

The Institute for Research and Technology Hellas (FORTH) & The University of Crete Medical School
on behalf of
The European Commission FP7-funded research program for
Inflammation and Cancer Research in Europe
(INFLA-CARE)
announces the

1st Inflammation & Cancer Summer School 2010

Topics:
Molecular mechanisms of carcinogenesis
Cytokines, senescence & cancer
The tumor microenvironment
Signaling pathways in inflammation and cancer
Inflammatory pathways in colorectal, lung & liver malignancies
Post-transcriptional networks in inflammation and cancer
In silico and transgenic models
Therapeutic targets

28 – 30 September 2010
Fodele Beach Hotel
Crete, Greece
www.inflacare2010.gr
Abstract deadline: 10 August 2010

The image contains logos for FORTH (Institute for Research and Technology Hellas) and the Infla-Care program. The background of the entire block is a scenic view of a snow-capped mountain range under a blue sky with light clouds.