MD/PhD National Student Conference
Keystone, Colorado
Dustin Donnelly and Dylan Nielson

We had the opportunity to attend the 25th Annual National MD/PhD Student Conference at the Keystone Resort in Colorado from July 23rd to 25th.

The conference is organized and run by the 3rd year students of the University of Colorado MSTP. Several internationally recognized scientists spoke on their work and experience with MD-PhD training. Among them, Dr. Elaine Fuchs, an HHMI investigator and member of the National Academy of Sciences, spoke about her work in skin stem cell biology and its clinical application. Dr. Irving Weissman, a pioneer of stem cell research and recipient of the NIH outstanding investigator award, gave a wide-ranging talk about the role of cancer stem cells in a variety of cancers.

Break-out sessions provided valuable insight on topics from mentor selection and writing workshops to transitioning back to the clinic, residency selection, and career options for physician-scientists. A panel discussion led by physician-scientists representing a range of career paths and small group sessions with individual members of the panel provided opportunities to obtain advice about the specifics of excelling in the different career paths available to MD-PhD students. Student oral presentations were polished and informative, covering topics across the spectrum of basic sciences, translational work, and clinical research. We both presented posters at the conference and were struck by the level of interaction with other students at these relaxed sessions.

Time in Keystone was not entirely devoted to science. Indeed, there were opportunities to socialize throughout the day. University of Colorado MSTP students were gracious hosts, holding nightly gatherings in a much more informal setting. They also organized activities for Sunday morning, featuring hikes in the surrounding mountains (including Quandry Peak, elevation 14,271 feet), kayaking, and yoga back at the lodge.

Pelotonia 2010
Edward Briercheck
At 5:30 am on most Saturdays, Olentangy River Road quietly wraps around The Ohio State University campus, with only the occasional engine interrupting the uniform glow of streetlights. On the morning of August 21st, however, cars lined both sides of the street with their turn signals excitedly blinking toward a common destination. These cars didn’t carry grills and tables for Buckeye football tailgating, but bicycles...plenty of them. Over 4,000 riders had descended on The Ohio State University campus to raise money for cancer research at the James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute. Welcome to Pelotonia 2010.

The name “Pelotonia” derives from the word “peloton” or the formation cyclists use when riding as a team. This special formation allows riders to limit wind resistance and move at speeds far greater than one rider could go alone. Riders in Pelotonia come from all walks of life. Some work in the clinics at the hospital, while others are researchers on the cutting edge of cancer therapeutics. Most riders, however, are individuals from the community who have had their lives touched by cancer. Riders could choose from a 23-mile, 43-mile, 102-mile, or 180-mile ride. This year, four MD/PhD students Suzi McClory, Nick Zorko, Patrick Grieson and Ed Briercheck took part in the ride and were joined by Associate Director of the MSP program Dr. Larry Kirschner.
The course began through campus, with cheers from cancer patients and their families inspiring riders for their journey ahead. The day one course would take 102-mile and 180-mile riders from Columbus, OH to Ohio University in Athens, OH. The course had many hills, which only grew higher as the ride rolled on. If the hills weren’t enough, rain showers, throughout the afternoon, also greeted riders. Despite these challenges, the support riders received from volunteers and community members was amazing. Once riders reached Athens they were greeted by food, music, and massages. This was a great finish for some, and a much needed break for others.

After sleeping in the Ohio University dorms, two-day riders were up for an early breakfast and the 78-mile trip to the finish. Tight muscles and tired eyes were obvious, but as the sun broke through, riders found their legs and were ready for an exciting finish. The second day wound through many of the same steep hills riders had overcome the day before. Finally, riders would make a left turn into Slate Run Metropark and know they were only moments from the end. Legs that seemed exhausted only miles ago suddenly found new life moving faster as the finish line drew them closer. The finish brought riders an amazing satisfaction, but for many it was only a small part of the Pelotonia experience. Pelotonia challenges riders, volunteers, and communities to work toward one goal, ending cancer. Without passionate individuals that raise awareness and money for research, science cannot progress. Likewise, without dedicated researchers new cures cannot be found. This is the essence of Pelotonia. Like cycling, medicine is too often seen as an individual effort, but anyone who has been in the clinic or the laboratory knows it is without a doubt a team effort with progress occurring at far greater speeds together than ever possible alone.

APSA Midwest Regional Meeting
Christopher Alvarez-Breckenridge

As the Ohio State Medical Scientist Program strives to distinguish itself, involvement within the physician scientist trainee community is an important step towards achieving this goal. During my time as a trainee, I have become actively involved in the American Physician Scientists Association (APSA) and currently serve as its president, following in the footsteps of its former president, Jim Pauff.

APSA is a national organization that is dedicated to addressing the needs of future physician scientists with a focus on training and career development. In order to accomplish this goal, APSA has identified mentorship, networking, outreach, and resources as the main pillars of our organization.

This year, The Ohio State University will host APSA’s inaugural Midwest Regional meeting in Columbus, Ohio on Saturday, October 30th in the BRT and we expect attendees to come from a variety of institutions across the Midwest. Additionally, we have decided to focus on the theme of balancing personal and professional challenges for optimal success with special sessions on issues facing women in the biomedical sciences.

The event will consist of keynote speakers including Dr. Juanita Merchant (University of Michigan) and Dr. Robin Lorenz (University of Alabama Birmingham); a research breakout session; and several breakout panels facilitated by notable OSU faculty and College of Medicine Leadership.

Our current slate of breakout panels includes:
- Achieving balance as a physician scientists—managing science, medicine, and family
- Obstacles for the female physician scientist—overcoming both the observable/unspoken barriers to women’s success and the problem of female student attrition in the biomedical sciences
- Mentorship panel lead by CTSA
- Approaching burnout—how to avoid physician scientist burnout
- Choosing the best road—deciphering the multitude of careers options for physician scientists
- Securing funding as a physician scientist
- Residency training options for tomorrow’s physician scientists

We are excited for this event and hope that you will join us for this inaugural event.
Rebekah Browning

Rebekah Browning received a Bachelor of Arts in English at Davidson College. She then returned to Ohio, where she completed her premedical requirements in the Continuing Education Program at The Ohio State University. She first became interested in research when she spent the eight months prior to medical school as a research assistant in the lab of Dr. John Byrd, where she researched Tcf1 expression as a potential prognostic factor in chronic lymphocytic leukemia. After completing her first two years of medical school at OSU, Rebekah returned to the Byrd lab for two years as a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Research Training Fellow; this extensive research experience cemented her goal to become a physician scientist and led to her application to the MSP program. Rebekah's research interests include cancer biology and immunology, and her current research project involves regulation of the interleukin-21 receptor in malignant B cells. Outside of her professional interests, Rebekah enjoys reading, baking, and cheering for the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Amanda Harper

I am originally from the small town of Ironton, Ohio, and I began my journey as a Buckeye four years ago. Upon completing my undergraduate education at The Ohio State University, I obtained a B.S. in Biomedical Science and a minor in Cultural Anthropology. When Dr. Schlesinger made that fateful phone call in May, I was ecstatic to find out that I would have the opportunity to continue my education here at OSU and pursue a combined MD/PhD degree. During my time as an MSP student, I hope to build upon the knowledge I gained throughout my undergraduate non-melanoma skin cancer research experience, and I would like to study tumor immunology utilizing a melanoma model in the years to come. Moreover, when I find time to get away from the bench and the books, I plan to continue exploring Columbus. I love all types of food, and not only will I be on a quest to discover more interesting restaurants, but I am determined to improve my cooking skills as well! I am also a huge fan of classic novels, The Office, and the Dave Matthews Band. Lastly, I enjoy new beginnings, and I cannot wait to see where this new chapter in my life will lead!

Daniel Clark

My name is Danny Clark and I graduated from Denison University in 2003 with a BS in physics and a minor in mathematics. After a few years of employment as a research engineer and an MS in physics from Ohio State, I found my true academic and professional passion in medicine. True to form of any physicist, I gravitated to the field of medical imaging, specifically MRI. After a year as a research engineer in the UCSF department of radiology, I chose to pursue an MD/PhD at OSU. Returning to Ohio was good for many reasons such as family in nearby Cleveland and maintaining the roots I had already established over the past few years here in Columbus, OH, a city which I absolutely enjoy. But most importantly, I found a research laboratory on the cutting edge of imaging science at the Wright Center of Innovation, an OSU and state of Ohio Third Frontier collaboration to translate new imaging technologies to the clinic. In my spare time I enjoy playing rock and roll the way my father taught me, with an old Gibson Les Paul and the Allman Brothers, and playing soccer every weekend.

OSUMC Research Day 2010

Congratulations to all MSP students who presented a poster at this year’s OSUMC Research Day:

Christopher Alvarez-Breckenridge
Adam Bevan – Travel Award Winner
Edward Briercheck
Rebekah Browning
Corey Clay
Dustin Donnelly
Patrick Grierson
Aaron Kithcart
Susan McClory
Dylan Nielson
Richard Price – Travel Award Winner
Sharon Schreiber
Travis Sharkey-Toppen
Alan Smith

Faculty Forum – June 2010

The Spring 2010 Faculty Forum focused on presentations by three MSP students – James Pauff, PhD, Susan McClory, and Christopher Alvarez-Breckenridge. The students focused on their current research, their involvement in the University outside of the MSP, and their plans for the future.
Katherine Hartmann

I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and spent my childhood in Cincinnati as well as rural Iowa and metro Atlanta. I did my undergraduate work at Cornell University where I was a biology major. While at Cornell, I had the opportunity to study abroad at the University of Padova in Italy and experience the Italian perspective on life and science. In my remaining time at Cornell I focused on exploring different fields of scientific study, trying to identify how to best incorporate my passion for biology into a future career. I participated in several different research projects ranging from a drug discovery initiative to epigenetics to an individual research project exploring old-field ecology. Through these endeavors, I discovered that the questions I asked, regardless of the project, were aimed at explaining how our environment impacts and interacts with our health. As I return to Ohio as an MD/PhD student, I’m excited to explore this paradigm further and to participate within the very welcoming and collaborative community of Ohio State. In addition to my passion for medicine and science, I enjoy cooking, crafts, and ballet - all of which I hope to dabble in while here in Columbus.

Steven Scoville

A native of Idaho Falls, Idaho, I recently completed my B.S. degree at Brigham Young University in Biochemistry with a minor in Chinese. One of the most rewarding academic experiences of my undergraduate career was completing an honors thesis in the laboratory of Dr. Daniel Simmons dealing with a novel splice variant of COX-1. This experience along with many other undergraduate experiences helped me to realize my love of discovery, especially in areas related to cancer. It is this passion, along with my desire to see and treat patients that I applied to MD/PhD programs. I am excited with the vast opportunities provided at OSU, and hope to continue focusing on a research project related to cancer biology. My hobbies include spending time with my wife and daughter, ultimate frisbee, playing the cello, and any other athletic activity.

Upcoming Events:

October 30, 2010: APSA Regional Meeting

November 18/19, 2010: MSP Annual Retreat

December 1, 2010: Mentoring Forms Due

December 2-4, 2010: Applicant Interview Session

January 20-22, 2010: Applicant Interview Session

February 24-26, 2010: Applicant Interview Session

April 7, 2011: 10th Annual OSUMC Trainee Research Day

April 7-9, 2011: MSP Second Look Visit