

# This Week @ UHL

January 21, 2008

Vol. 3 No. 3

## Genetics Fellow Joins Newborn Screening

The UHL Newborn Screening section in Ankeny welcomed a new fellow this month who will use the knowledge she gained in the Lab to help make prenatal diagnoses.



Dr. Kristi Borowski

Dr. Kristi Borowski spent two weeks at the UHL for a laboratory rotation as part of a combined Maternal Fetal Medicine/Genetics Fellowship at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. Prior to entering this four-year program in 2004, Kristi completed an obstetrics and gynecology residency through Mayo Clinic in Minnesota after earning her medical degree at the University of Wisconsin.

"This is the first time we have had a Genetics Fellow work with the Newborn Screening Lab, and we will have a Molecular Genetics Fellow arrive in February," says Marcia Valbracht, UHL newborn screening supervisor. "It is beneficial for all when the doctors and geneticists visit the Lab. When they understand our challenges, it helps with the

communication process."

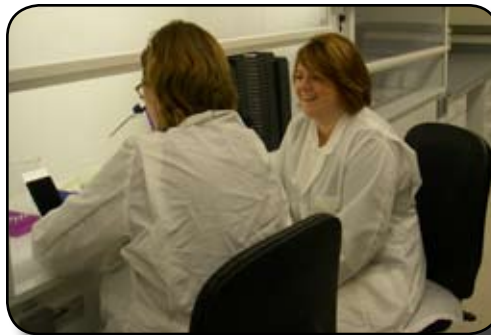
The fellowship program combines work in medical genetics clinics with rotations through three types of clinical laboratories: cytogenetics, molecular genetics and biochemical genetics. The UHL is considered a biochemical genetics lab.

"I am spending time in Tandem Mass Spec (MS/MS) and Newborn Screening to understand the testing that leads to the diagnosis of inherited metabolic diseases such as phenylketonuria and MCADD, which I will see in genetics clinics," Kristi says. Children born with MCADD (Medium Chain Acyl-CoA Dehydrogenase Deficiency) lack the enzyme to convert fat to energy.

"I hope to have a better understanding of how MS/MS works and the system that provides the newborn screening results; for example, how positive screens are evaluated and reported out."

During the rotation, Kristi worked with the UHL Newborn Screening team, including Marcia Valbracht, Val VanZee and Mike Ramirez.

"I plan to use my genetics training in prenatal diagnosis," she says. I realized in residency that this is the area I was interested in. I also have had the opportunity to participate in genetics research and plan to continue that in the future as well."



Genetics Fellow Dr. Kristi Borowski (right) with UHL's Val VanZee.

## Ethics Training Set for January 22

A one-hour teleconference on ethics training is scheduled for noon Tuesday, January 22 in the Oakdale Hall Auditorium and Ankeny Conference Room.

This program includes practical examples related to ethical conduct and management practices as defined in several reference sources, including the National Environmental Accreditation Program, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

All UHL staff members are required to attend this training, which meets annual training requirements for accreditations. Staff members who are unable to attend the teleconference can view the DVD that will be available.

## What's Up?

The First Fellow

An Ethics Must

The Winning Grant

Nominations, Please

Just in Time (Tracker)

## Next Week...



Gemy Returns

## The Week Ahead

**Monday, January 21**

Martin Luther King Jr.  
University Holiday

**Tuesday, January 22**

10 a.m. - "Gemy the Germ"  
ICN Room

Noon - Ethics Training  
Oakdale Hall Auditorium  
Ankeny Conference Room

**Wednesday, January 23**

Noon in Borts  
"2008 CLSI Standard for  
Antimicrobial Susceptibility  
Testing" Teleconference

University Hygienic Laboratory  
Iowa City & Ankeny  
1-800-421-IOWA & 515-725-1600  
[www.uhl.uiowa.edu](http://www.uhl.uiowa.edu)

## Williamsburg Student is Recipient of UHL Grant

Rachel Schnebbe, an eighth-grade student at Williamsburg Junior/Senior High School, is the first recipient of the University Hygienic Laboratory Student Grant for the 2007-2008 school year. The Student Grant program provides laboratory expertise and mentoring for junior high and senior high school students to assist them in completion of science projects.



*Rachel Schnebbe*

Rachel's project is part of an extracurricular activity that will be included in her school's upcoming science fair. She is comparing the level of radon in water and air collected from five locations in and around her hometown of Williamsburg, Iowa. Radon is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas that causes an estimated 399 deaths from lung cancer in Iowa each year, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Beginning this month, the UHL is supporting Rachel's efforts to measure the level of radon in water by providing testing in the Lab. The young scientist is working with staff from the UHL radiochemistry section for a close-up view of the procedures and to gain insight into laboratory science.

"When students craft and carry out their own science projects, it creates an ownership and sparks an interest that often leads to continued study in the field of science," says Beth Hochstedler, UHL training and outreach coordinator. "We know that this approach works to develop future public health professionals. A former Student Grant recipient tells us that because of her projects and the experience at UHL, she continued her study of science. She is now working for the UI Ophthalmology Department."

After collecting water samples, Rachel will assist in preparing them for analysis in the UHL lab and learn about the quality control criteria followed for the testing method. Her objective is to determine if radon levels in the sampled homes are below the EPA recommendations for health protection.

"This program is important because public health and the field of radiochemistry are in severe need of growth in our workforce," explains Marinea Mehrhoff, UHL supervisor of radiochemistry and Rachel's UHL mentor. "One of the reasons I participate in the Student Grant program is to develop students' understanding of how to apply science as a career other than in your typical medical situation. Students get to see something else they can do in this field."

The UHL has offered the Student Grant program since 2000. Former projects include "Root Absorption on Atrazine Contaminated Pond Water," "Don't Forget to Wash Your Bathroom Faucet Knob," and "How Clean is Your Toothbrush?"

"The UHL staff members who serve as mentors for the Student Grant program deserve a special thank-you," Beth adds. "They carve out time for these outreach activities because they see the excitement these projects generate."

More information is available in the Education/Training section of the UHL website ([www.uhl.uiowa.edu](http://www.uhl.uiowa.edu)).



*UHL Student Grant recipient Rachel Schnebbe watches Shea McDowell, UHL chemist, prepare a water sample for radon testing.*

## Committee Seeks Award Nominations

Do you know a UHL staff member who is an "exceptional person who goes out of his/her way to be cheerful, helpful and considerate"? If so, consider nominating that person for the Duncan Walker Memorial Award before the April 1 deadline.

This posthumous award memorializes Duncan B. Walker who personified these positive attributes. Duncan worked in the Ankeny Lab from July 1998 until he died in December 2003.

Any staff member can be nominated for this award. Recipients must exemplify commitment, integrity, sincerity and a respect for diversity. Nomination forms are available on the M drive in the Human Resources folder under "Recognition information."



*Duncan Walker Award Plaque*

## Save Time and Paper with New Tracking System

Reporting vacation and sick leave will be an electronic process at the UHL beginning February 1 when the new Time Tracker program is launched Labwide. The UHL's Information Technology team created the program that will replace paper requests for paid time off.

Another large component of this unique system is the tracking feature that allows staff to generate reports about the amount of time spent on projects. This data can be used in the grant application process and to help determine the cost of services UHL provides.

Time Tracker will be managed by the UHL team of Mary DeMartino, bacteriology supervisor and bioterrorism technical specialist; Sarah May, supervisory chemist; Mike Schueller, limnology supervisor-Iowa City; Carole Teator, grants and contracts manager; and Teresa Winder, senior accountant. The team will distribute information about adding projects to the system. More information about Time Tracker is available on the M drive in the "How to" folder.

Training for Time Tracker recently was held in Ankeny and Iowa City. A DVD will be available in the Ankeny and Iowa City libraries for those unable to attend a training session.

If you prefer to receive a hard copy of "This Week @ UHL," please e-mail Sally Tye at [stye@uhl.uiowa.edu](mailto:stye@uhl.uiowa.edu).

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