



# New York State International Training and Research Program

VOL I: SPRING 2004

## US-Georgia Biomedical Symposium a Success

In October of last year, US investigators descended upon the beautiful city of Tblisi to join their Georgian colleagues to celebrate five years of successful collaboration. The conference, entitled "U.S.-Georgia Biomedical Collaboration: Past Accomplishments, Current Status, and Future Regional Opportunities in the Caucasus," took place from October 16-18th. The event created a unique opportunity to review past successes, discuss current health trends, and look forward to new collaborations. Successes include accomplishments in areas such as HIV/AIDS, emerging infectious diseases, TB, HCV, intravenous drug use and sexually transmitted diseases. Other public health concerns such as oncology, palliative care and tobacco use were also discussed.

The establishment of a comprehensive healthcare system is crucial to developing countries. Lack of access to funding and the most advanced medical research and technology can have a deleterious effect in areas that are experiencing soaring rates of infectious disease and rampant drug use. Indeed, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia cites goals the govern-

ment has set in order to provide quality healthcare to all of its citizens, including the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, addressing and preventing drug abuse, measures to treat sexually transmitted disease monitor the blood supply and conduct mass vaccination programs, especially for children.

Eduard Shevardnadze, (former) President of Georgia, stated "Georgia, like many other developing nations, lacks adequate finances for reorganizing the health care system....we hope (the symposium) will serve as a cornerstone in combating global health problems such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis, oncological diseases, drug addiction and tobacco use that poses a deadly threat not only to the Georgian population but the nations across the world."

Avtandil Jorbenadze, State Minister of Georgia, adds, "Georgia has still a long and difficult way to go on the path of building a truly democratic society whereas the existence of a contemporary health system is an essential attribute of such a society." While Dr Jorbenadze graciously thanked American collaborators for their support, he extended his thanks to "medical scientists from Armenia and Azerbaijan participating in the

symposium, expressing my strong belief that the meeting shall promote the development of regional cooperation and will play an important role in maintaining peace in the region."

In addition to maintaining and strengthening existing relationships between Georgian and US collaborators, another major goal of this conference was to identify new collaborations and extend research opportunities into other Caucasus countries.

The symposium was sponsored by The Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of the Republic of Georgia and the Fogarty International Center (FIC) of the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH). Other sponsors included U.S. Civilian Research and Development Foundation (CRDF), Biotechnology Engagement Project (BTEP), National Cancer Institute (NCI), and National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

Dr. Jack DeHovitz (SUNY Downstate Medical Center), Dr. Dale Morse (NYS Department of Health) and Dr. Louise-Anne McNutt (SUNY School of Public Health) attended the conference.



## Interview with Anneli Uuskula, MD, PhD, MS

Researcher, Department of Public Health, University of Tartu  
Physician, Clinic of Dermatology, Foundation of Tartu University Clinics



### **When were you a trainee?**

I graduated with an MS from the State University of New York at Albany's School of Public Health in May 2003. My concentration was in epidemiology.

### **What was your thesis topic?**

Treatment of sexually transmitted diseases in Estonia: consistency with the evidence based medicine principles.

### **What is your current institution?**

I have two roles: a researcher in the Department of Public Health, University of Tartu. Also, as a lecturer in the Clinic of Dermatology, Foundation of Tartu University Clinics.

### **What are some projects you are working on?**

Since 2001, "HIV risk reduction in Estonia," a World AIDS Foundation grant; since 2002, "Treatment of sexually transmitted diseases in Estonia," an Estonian Ministry of Education grant; since 2003, "Study on injecting drug users' needles and syringes: detection of markers of HBV, HCV, and HIV infections," an Estonian Science Foundation grant. I also teach during the week and do clinic work about 10 hours a week.

### **Why did you become interested in working in the field of HIV/AIDS?**

Well, by specialization I am a dermatovenerologist; a specialist responsible for STD care in Estonia. I became interested in epidemiology of STDs, possibly in relation to the explosive 'outbreak' of syphilis and other STDs in early 1990. One thing led to another; including a fruitful collaboration with Dr DeHovitz and other members of his department (Susan Holman, NP; Tracey Wilson, PhD) led to another scientific projects and I become a Fogarty trainee. Again, the IDU related epidemic in Estonia in early 2000-s led to new projects.

### **What are some grants you've applied for since you graduated, and were awarded?**

Just recently, an Advanced In-Country Training Grant (sponsored by the Fogarty foundation) for "Study on injecting drug users' syringes: detection of markers of HBV, HCV and HIV infections. Also, this year, I plan to do research in cooperation with the Estonian Health Development Institute. These are baseline, repeated behavioral surveys in sub-populations that are the target beneficiaries of Global Fund to fight against AIDS, TB and malaria programs. I am planning and designing HIV prevalence studies in target populations, and studies to estimate the size of populations of interest. I've applied for a grant from the NIH for "Screening for STDs using home sampling in Estonia." This is through their program entitled *Global Health Research Initiative Program for New Foreign Investigators*. I recently received a grant from CRDF, which offered awards for collaborations in HIV/AIDS between US Scientists and FSU/Baltic countries. The name of my proposal is "Collaborative response to tackle HIV epidemic in Baltics: international and multidisciplinary workshop to prioritize areas and methods of research that are most essential and timely." The conference will take place August 3-6, 2004.

### **What obstacles do you face in providing effective healthcare in Estonia?**

Obstacles exist in providing healthcare and also in research: the evidence-based approach is still ignored and undervalued in day-to-day activities, personnel and co-workers lack up-to-date information and education and there is also a lack of an effective network of research and friendly collaboration in Estonia. Also, talented and qualified people in the fields of medicine and statistics are frequently employed by pharmaceutical or international companies (due to considerably higher salaries), so fewer people remain in government or academic settings.

# Recent Publications by Current/Former Trainees

Kocsis J., Prohaszka Z., Biro A., Fust G., **Banhegyi D.** Elevated levels of antibodies against 70 kDa heat shock proteins in the sera of patients with HIV infection. *J Med Virol.* 2003 Dec;71(4): 480-2

Savari C., Szlavik J., **Banhegyi D.** First case of primary multidrug-resistant pulmonary tuberculosis in a HIV-infected patient in Hungary. *Eur J Clin Microbiol Infect Dis.* 2003 Oct;22(10):635-6

Barbakadze G., **Kamkamidze G., Butsashvili M.,** Kiladze M., Jatchvliani D. The role of specific CD4+ T helper cell response in the course of hepatitis C virus infection. *Sb Lek.* 2003;104(1):79-83

Caplinskiene I., **Caplinskas S.,** Griskevicius A. Narcotic abuse and HIV infection in prisons. *Medicina (Kaunas).* 2003;39(8):797-803.

**Beran O., Holub M.,** Spala J., Kalanin J., Stankova M. Cd38 expression on Cd8+ T cells in Human immunodeficiency virus 1-positive adults treated with HAART. *Acta Virol.* 2003;47(2):121-4.

Radkowski M., **Bednarska A., Horban A.,** Stanczak J., Wilkinson J., Adair D.M., Nowicki M., Rakela J., Laskus T. Infection of primary human macrophages with hepatitis C virus in vitro: induction of tumour necrosis factor-alpha and interleukin 8. *J Gen Virol.* 2004 Jan;85(Pt 1):47-59.

Gaben A.M., Saucier C., Bedin M., Barbu V., **Mester J.** Rapamycin inhibits cdk4 activation, p 21(WAF1/CIP1) expression and G1-phase progression in transformed mouse fibroblasts. *Int J Cancer.* 2004 Jan 10;108(2):200-6.

**Stejskal F., Slapeta J., Ctrna V.,** Keithly J.S. A Narf-like gene from *Cryptosporidium parvum* resembles homologues observed in aerobic protists and higher eukaryotes. *FEMS Microbiol Lett.* 2003 Dec 5;229(1):91-6.

**Somoskovi A.,** Wade M.M., Sun Z., Zhang Y. Iron enhances the antituberculous activity of pyrazinamide. *J Antimicrob Chemother.* 2004 Feb;53(2):192-6.

Lantos A., Niemann S., Mezosi L., Sos E., Erdelyi K., David S., Parsons L.M., Kubica T., Rusch-Gerdes S., **Somoskovi A.** Pulmonary tuberculosis due to *Mycobacterium bovis* subsp. *caprae* in captive Siberian tiger. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2003 Nov;9(11):1462-4.

**Zielinski A.,** Kwon C.B., Tomaszunas-Blaszczyk J., Magdzik W., Bennett J.V. Risk of *Haemophilus influenzae* type b meningitis in Polish children varies directly with number of siblings: possible implications for vaccination strategies. *Eur J Epidemiol.* 2003;18(9):917-22.

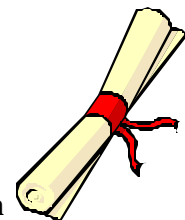
## Completion of the Fogarty Program

### School of Public Health

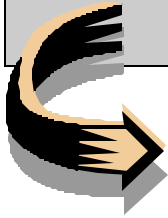
Maia Kajaia, Georgia (MS)  
Kartlos Kankazde, Georgia (MPH)  
Gundegmaa Jaama, Mongolia (MPH)  
Pawel Stefanoff, Poland (MS)

### Lab Trainees

Natia Dvali, MD; Georgia  
Oleg Sinyavskiy, MD; Kazakhstan



# Grants...Grants...Grants...



**B**e sure to check out the Civilian Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) Website. CRDF is a nonprofit organization authorized by the U.S. Congress and established in 1995 by the National Science Foundation. This unique public-private partnership promotes international scientific and technical collaboration, primarily between the United States and Eurasia, through grants, technical resources, and training.

Three former Trainees Anneli Uuskula, Dmitri Lioznov and Lusine Ghazaryan were awarded CRDF grants for "Collaboration of high-quality research in HIV/AIDS and related co-infections between US scientists and US/FSU Baltic Countries," "Russian-US Binational workshop: Development of collaborative research agenda for the prevention of HIV/AIDS and related diseases," and "Development of biomedical and behavioral interventions to prevent new infections in HIV," respectively. A synopsis of these conferences will be available in the next newsletter.

## **Great Opportunity: The Cooperative Research Grant.**

The CRDF will accept joint U.S-FSU/Baltic proposals in the biological, biomedical, and behavioral sciences and engineering that promise innovative research in the HIV/AIDS-related subject areas cited above. Funding is \$100,000 up to two years.

If you are interested in applying for this or another CRDF grant, please go to their website at :  
<http://www.crdf.org/ApplicationForms/apps.html>

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**The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation** announces the availability of Requests for Applications (RFAs) for their 2004 and 2005 Programs. Applications are accepted from U.S. and international not-for-profit institutions. Detailed descriptions of their programs and downloadable RFAs are now available on the Foundation website: [www.pedaids.org](http://www.pedaids.org). Of particular interest are the following opportunities:

**2004 Two Year International Scholar Awards.** This is a postdoctoral fellowship for Developing Country Clinicians/Scientists providing 2 years of salary support, and up to \$10,000 for supplies and travel. *Letter of intent is due June 11, 2004.*

**2005 International Leadership Awards:** This is a three-year award for Developing Country leaders in HIV/AIDS program implementation and research. Up to \$450,000 in direct costs is provided for up to 3 years. *Letter of intent is due June 11, 2004.*

If you are interested in receiving further announcements from the Foundation, please send your email address to:  
[Research@pedaids.org](mailto:Research@pedaids.org).

## **Fogarty Grant Opportunities**

**AIDS INTERNATIONAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH PROGRAM**  
PA NUMBER: PA-03-018

This RFA (Request for Applications) solicits applicants for advanced in-country training support. This award will support up to two years at \$25,000, per supplemental application.

This information can be found at: <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-03-018.html>. Look under the heading "Mechanism of Support." Additional information containing instructions for supplemental applications can also be found in this document.

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**GRIP** (Global Health Research Initiative Program for New Foreign Investigators) is a Fogarty grant that provides an excellent opportunity for trainees returning to their home country to enhance their scientific research. Upon completion of research, investigators will have the tools to continue to pursue fruitful research and lead productive careers, including expert training, consultation or research related to biomedical issues within their home institutions.

Application Receipt Date: August 25, 2004; August 25, 2005. Website: <http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/GRIP.html>.

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The Fogarty International Research Collaboration Award (**FIRCA**) is open to all Trainees and their US Principal Investigators. The grant is awarded to the US based institution that will work directly with the Fogarty trainee and their home institution. All biomedical and behavioral research topics supported by the NIH are eligible for inclusion. Website: <http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/firca.html>. Deadlines are November 25, March 25 and July 25. Please keep in mind that FIRCAs are not AIDS related grants.

**Find additional information about Fogarty grants at <http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/grants.html>**

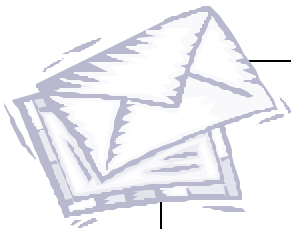
# News....

Pawel Stefanoff (MS candidate, SUNY School of Public Health) recently presented two abstracts which were accepted for the 2004 ICEID conference (held this year in Atlanta, Georgia).

- ◆ Stefanoff P, Rosinska M, Jarzabek Z. Factors influencing risk of poliovirus reemergence in Poland.
- ◆ Stefanoff P, Zielinski A, Eidson M, Morse DL. Case ascertainment of tick-borne encephalitis in Poland.

Also....

- ◆ 104<sup>th</sup> American Society for Microbiology General Meeting, New Orleans, LA, May 22-28, 2004. Sinyavskiy, O, Parsons LM, Clobridge AM, Larsen SC, Salfinger M. Comparison of Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB) MICs and Reportable Concentrations to Ethambutol (EMB) or Streptomycin (SM) Using the BACTEC MGIT 960 or the Radio metric BACTEC 460.
- ◆ 14<sup>th</sup> European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Disease, Prague, Czech Republic, May 1-4, 2004. Beran O, Lawrence D. Drug Modulation of Toll-like Receptors (TLR) Expression in Human Macrophages Stimulated by LPS and Bacteria.
- ◆ 11<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Infectious Disease, Cancun, Mexico, March 4-7, 2004. Beran O, Holub M, Hnykova J, Rozsypal H, Spala J. Expressions of CD38 Antigen on CD8+T lymphocytes in HIV-1 Infected Adults: The Czech Prospective Study.



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Please keep in touch!  
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## Important Websites:

[www.downstate.edu/hiv/p3a.html](http://www.downstate.edu/hiv/p3a.html)  
[www.health.state.ny.us](http://www.health.state.ny.us)  
[www.wadsworth.org/educate/educate.htm](http://www.wadsworth.org/educate/educate.htm)  
[www.albany.edu/sph/](http://www.albany.edu/sph/)  
[www.fic.nih.gov/index.html](http://www.fic.nih.gov/index.html)