Dr. Wah Chiu named to National Academy of Sciences

Dr. Wah Chiu, the Alvin Romansky Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and Director of the National Center for Macromolecular Imaging at Baylor College of Medicine, has been elected to the National Academy of Sciences.

Chiu, who is also Professor of Molecular and Cellular Biology, Molecular Physiology and Biophysics, and Molecular Virology and Microbiology, was one of 84 new members and 21 foreign associates elected in recognition of their distinguished and continuing achievements in original research.

Dr. Wah Chiu is an exceptional scientist and is most deserving of this honor. He has made many important contributions in computational biology and molecular imaging and has been a leader in collaborative efforts, as well as training an entire team of scientists to follow in his footsteps.

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New BCM McNair Scholar applies stem cell technology to advance diabetes research

Stem cell and regenerative medicine expert Dr. Małgorzata Borowiak has been named Baylor College of Medicine’s fifth McNair Scholar. She will focus on diabetes.

Using stem cell technology, Borowiak’s research focuses on understanding the mechanisms of type 1 diabetes to identify new, cellular treatments for the disease.

The McNair Scholar program at BCM, supported by the Robert and Janice McNair Foundation and managed by the McNair Medical Institute, identifies “rising stars” in biomedical research in four areas—breast cancer, pancreatic cancer, juvenile diabetes and neuroscience.

Borowiak, who started at BCM in January, serves as an Assistant Professor of Molecular and Cellular Biology and as a member of the Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine Center at BCM and the Center for Cell

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2012-13 Houston-Galveston Schweitzer Fellows named

The Albert Schweitzer Fellowship announced the selection of 12 graduate students as the 2012-13 class of Houston-Galveston Schweitzer Fellows. Five of these students are from Baylor College of Medicine.

They will partner with local community-based organizations to develop and implement yearlong, mentored service projects that help improve the health and well-being of the underserved.


This year’s BCM fellows include:

- **Vishwaratn Asthana and Miel Sundararajan**
  Asthana and Sundararajan will address the lack of primary care options for uninsured people by developing a preventive health counseling program for individuals seeking primary care in the emergency center.
  **Community Site:** Ben Taub General Hospital Ginni and Richard Mithoff Trauma Center

- **Andrew Franco and Akhil Shenoy**
  Franco and Shenoy will develop a meal program and job training curriculum that empowers homeless young adults in Houston to lead healthier and more self-sustained lives.
  **Community Site:** The Haven Center at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church

- **Shehni Nadeem**
  Nadeem will develop a program (SPEED Team - Skin Protection Education and Empowerment Discharge Team) for newborns and their mothers promoting sun safety and skin cancer prevention.
  **Community Site:** Ben Taub General Hospital
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Chiu’s work is focused on the development of the high throughput methodology for electron cryo-microscopy and computational methods to solve 3-dimensional structures of macromolecular machines towards atomic resolution. The biological applications of this methodology include viruses, ion channels, membranes, oligomeric proteins, protein folding machines, and cytoskeletal protein complexes. The structures of these complexes, determined with ever improving resolution, are revealing new insights into their functions in human health and disease.

Chiu is the seventh BCM faculty member to be named to the Academy. He joins Drs. Arthur Beaudet, Chair of Molecular and Human Genetics; Thomas Caskey, Professor of Molecular and Human Genetics; Mary Estes, Professor of Molecular Virology and Microbiology and Medicine; Bert O’Malley, Chair of Molecular and Cellular Biology; Salih Wakil, Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology; and Huda Zoghbi, Professor of Molecular and Human Genetics, Pediatrics, Neurology and Neuroscience and Director of the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute at Texas Children’s Hospital.

McNair Scholar

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and Gene Therapy at BCM, Texas Children’s Hospital and The Methodist Hospital.

Prior to joining BCM, Borowiak trained under Dr. Douglas Melton, a renowned leader in stem cell biology, at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass. She received a Ph.D. in developmental biology/signaling from Free University and Max-Delbrueck Centrum for Molecular Medicine in Berlin, Germany. She completed a master’s of science in biotechnology from Adam Mickiewicz University and the Polish Academy of Sciences in Poznan, Poland, her native country.

In Berlin, Borowiak became interested in unique and alternate methods of liver regeneration. When she moved to Melton’s lab at Harvard, she combined that with her interest in stem cells.

Borowiak is the fifth McNair Scholar announced since the program’s first recruit, Dr. Ben Arenkiel was announced in June 2010, followed by Dr. Xiang Zhang, Dr. Jake Kushner and Dr. Melissa Bondy.

STUDENT CORNER: Amanda Little

Second-year medical student

Amanda Little has always been interested in public health, so her recent designation as a Paul Ambrose Scholar is fitting.

The Paul Ambrose Scholars Program offers emerging medical professionals a deeper understanding of the complexities and varying perspectives of public health. The program gives scholars the tools and knowledge to effect change in their own communities in areas such as health policy, health literacy, policy planning and health care finance and delivery.

Part of being a scholar means conducting a funded community education project, and Little’s project will entail partnering with a local African American church to develop a two-month diet and exercise program. The program will consist of workshops held every other Saturday for two months. They will begin with discussion of a health focus such as diabetes or nutrition, followed by a short exercise program.

Her interest in public health started as an anthropology major at Washington University in Saint Louis, where she quickly uncovered her desire to practice medicine in a way that incorporated an understanding of the greater social and environmental factors influencing an individual’s health care.

In addition to being named as a Paul Ambrose Scholar, she was recently selected as the second-year representative for the Association of American Medical Colleges – Organization of Student Representatives. As a student representative, she will focus on bringing the needs and concerns of Baylor medical students to a national forum. As part of this, a Community Service Project Day for the incoming medical student class that will occur at the end of Orientation Week is currently being planned.

Little recently served as acting secretary for the Student National Medical Association, an organization dedicated to supporting minority medical students and increasing the number of clinically excellent, culturally competent and socially conscious physicians. The group works closely with the BCM Office of Diversity on projects such as Saturday Morning Science.

Little also is a National Health Service Corps scholar. Through this nationally funded program that provides a stipend for medical school, she will work four years in a medically underserved community upon completing her residency. Its goal is to bring practitioners to the parts of the country that most need it.

She is considering conducting her residency in internal medicine or medicine/pediatrics.