



GRG President's Report

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Published online: 20 August 2015
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It is the time of year where we would like to take the opportunity to update the readership of *Digestive Diseases and Sciences* on the past year's Gastroenterology Research Group (GRG) activities. First off, we want to thank all of the members and speakers for their participations in the 2015 GRG Spring Symposium held during Digestive Disease Week on Saturday, May 16, 2015, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC, USA. The symposium was entitled "Chips Ahoy" and was chaired by Drs. John P. Lynch and Barbara H. Jung. Three excellent lectures were presented:

1. Nancy L. Allbritton, MD, PhD, University of North Carolina: "Intestine On a Chip"
2. Dongeun "Dan" Huh, PhD, University of Pennsylvania: "Microengineered Physiological Bio-mimicry: Human Organs-on-Chips"
3. Syed A. Hashsham, PhD, Michigan State University: "Gut Microbiome, Human Health and Rapid DX Chips"

GRG/AGA Young Investigator Awards and Fellow Travel Awards

The central mission of the GRG is to foster, support, and promote the careers of young investigators (physician-scientist and doctoral scientists) who have research programs

focused on the study of GI and liver disease. In order to advance this mission, the GRG recognizes the exceptional achievements of investigators conducting GI and Hepatology research with the Young Investigator Awards for Clinical Science and for Basic Science Research. Moreover, the GRG grants travel awards and an award for the Best Abstract of the Year from the pool of the eight abstracts selected for travel awards. The exceptionally talented applicant pool also increased the difficulty of selecting the three awardees described below, who were recognized at the GRG Symposium.

The GRG is pleased to announce the following awardees:

Young Investigator Award for Clinical Sciences Research: Hamed Khalili, MD



Dr. Hamed Khalili is a member in the Crohn's and Colitis Center of the Gastroenterology Department of Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital of Harvard University and

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is an instructor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. His research interests are to better understand and define environmental factors, particularly dietary, reproductive, and lifestyle factors, and their interplay with common genetic risk loci and gut microbial environment on risk and progression of inflammatory bowel disease. Dr. Khalili received his MD at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School and his MPH from Harvard School of Public Health. He completed his internal medicine residency at the University of Texas Southwestern, Parkland, and his GI fellowship at the Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Khalili has authored more than 56 publications in numerous peer-reviewed journals including *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, *Gut*, and *Gastroenterology*.

**Young Investigator Award for Basic Science
Research: Aleixo Muise, MD, PhD, FRCPC**



Dr. Muise is a Clinician Scientist in the Program in Cell Biology, Research Institute, Hospital for Sick Children, and Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, Departments of Biochemistry, Pediatrics, and IMS University of Toronto. His clinical work and laboratory research are focused on understanding the genetic susceptibility and function of identified genes in pathogenesis of very early onset inflammatory bowel disease (VEOIBD; IBD diagnosed in infants and in children aged under 6 years). He has founded the “SickKids-based International Early Onset Pediatric IBD Cohort Study” (NEOPICS; www.NEOPICS.org) and is Co-PI of the Helmsley Charitable Trust VEOIBD Initiative. His laboratory recently described a novel form of VEOIBD characterized by severe apoptotic enterocolitis, identifying the causative mutations that are termed TTC7A deficiency. His team also identified a PLVAP (plasmalemma vesicle-associated protein) mutation causative of a novel form of “sieving”

protein-losing enteropathy (PLE) characterized by hypoproteinemia, hypoalbuminemia, and hypertriglyceridemia. His group has identified rare functional variants in the NADPH oxidase genes NOX2 (NADPH oxidase 2), NCF1/2/4 (neutrophil cytosolic factor), RAC1/2, and the enterocyte NADPH oxidases DUOX2 (dual oxidase 2) and NOX1, as well as in iNOS and IL10R that increase the risk of developing VEOIBD, with the hope to identify novel treatment strategies based on these genetic findings.

GRG Fellow Travel Abstract of the Year: Dror S. Shouval, MD



Dr. Shouval, a clinical fellow in the Harvard Fellowship in GI/Nutrition program at Boston Children’s Hospital, was awarded the Abstract of the Year award for innovative research in defining the inflammatory response in IL10R-deficient model systems to identify potential clinical interventions in severe infantile IBD. He observed that innate immune IL1 β production is critical in mediating exaggerated pro-inflammatory responses in the setting of IL10R deficiency and neutralizing IL-1 with antagonists like anakinra may be a therapeutic bridge to stem cell transplantation in patients with IL10R deficiency.

In closing, planning for the 2016 GRG Spring Symposium is currently underway. For information about the GRG Awards and other GRG activities, please visit our Web site www.gastroresearch.org.

We also encourage members of the GRG to submit original clinical and basic science manuscripts to DDS. Finally, we look forward to ongoing support of the GRG’s senior mentors of young investigators’ submission of up-to-date translational research reviews to DDS as a means for GRG to advance its mission in GI and Hepatology research.