

Committee Corner: AAI Minority Affairs Committee (MAC)

Ten Questions with AAI Minority Affairs Chair Randy Brutkiewicz

Since 2005, **Randy R. Brutkiewicz, Ph.D., AAI '89**, has served as Chair of the AAI's Minority Affairs Committee (MAC). He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the Indiana University School of Medicine, and Associate Member of the Walther Oncology Center in the Walther Cancer Institute. His research interests are in the areas of innate immunity (mainly CD1d-mediated antigen presentation to NKT cells) and more recently, the role of signal transduction pathways in the control of immune responses.

(1) What does the MAC do? *Our committee is charged with "generating and developing programs that assure equal treatment of all professional immunologists on the basis of merit." At the AAI Meeting, we sponsor an annual breakfast session on varying topics, as well as a Special Lecture. Both are generously supported by a MARC grant from the NIGMS.*

(2) How is it that you have become so actively interested in minority affairs?

Besides viewing it as simply the right thing to do, I have a personal stake in this area (and this may surprise many who know me but not my family). My mother is Puerto Rican (both of her parents were born and raised there), and I was brought up to do what I could to ensure equal opportunities for all. It is not what you are, but who you are.



(3) What are you most proud of as MAC Chair? *In the past year, we have more than doubled the size of our minority members list (<http://www.aai.org/committees/minority/MinorityMembersPage.htm>). This includes pre- and postdoctoral trainees — not just faculty level members. I am also very pleased with the speakers we have had as our MAC-Sponsored Lecturers, such as Diana Lopez and Avery August. The year before I became Chair, we had Juan-Carlos Zuñiga-Pflucker. As these names illustrate, we have been very fortunate to have this caliber of speakers serving as our Special Lecturers.*

(4) What does the MAC need to do better? *Significantly enhance networking opportunities for our trainees. At next year's Experimental Biology '08 meeting, we will have a networking workshop where the trainees will sit at tables headed by a minority faculty member (e.g., MAC members and others who "have been there and done that"). It should be a lot of fun.*

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Members in the News

Dr. Ferrone Accepts University of Pittsburgh Appointment

Soldano Ferrone, M.D., Ph.D., AAI '72, is the new Associate Director for Faculty Career Development and Advancement at the Hillman Cancer Center, University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute.

Dr. Ferrone recently served as a Member (and Chair from 1999-2006) of the Department of Immunology at Roswell Park Cancer Institute and as a Professor of Microbiology in the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at SUNY Buffalo. His previous professional service includes appointments at the University of Milan Medical School; Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation; University of Padua, Italy, Medical School; University of California, San Diego, Medical School; Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons; and New York Medical College.



Dr. Ferrone's lab research focuses on characterization of escape mechanisms utilized by tumor cells and the development and application of antibody-based immunotherapy. He holds a Ph.D. (Hematology) from the University of Milan, Italy, and M.D. (*summa cum laude*) from the University of Milan Medical School.

Dr. Ferrone is a past reviewer for *The Journal of Immunology* and currently serves as a Deputy Editor for the *Journal of Translational Medicine*. His honors include the Alexander Von Humboldt Award (Germany) - Senior Distinguished U.S. Scientist. He is a member of the American Association for Cancer Research and the Transplantation Society.

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Ten Questions with AAI Minority Affairs Chair

Randy Brutkiewicz (cont'd from p. 4)

(5) What discoveries are you proudest of in your scientific career? *I have had the good fortune of having great collaborators since my time as a postdoc (with Jon Yewdell and Jack Bennink, who were also collaborators on the first two papers indicated below), as well as having outstanding trainees in my laboratory. As is not unusual, my contributions are known by colleagues who work in the field, but perhaps not so many outside of it. I would choose five observations to highlight:*

- *NKT cells recognize CD1d (in 1995 with Albert Bendelac);*
- *Identification of a natural ligand for mouse CD1d1 (in 1998 with Sebastian Joyce);*
- *Glycolipid shedding as a means of innate immune evasion by hematopoietic tumors (2002);*
- *alpha-glucuronosylceramide from the bacterium *Sphingomonas paucimobilis* as a CD1d-presented ligand to NKT cells (2005);*
- *Regulation of antigen presentation by signal transduction pathways (2005; 2007).*

(Dr. Brutkiewicz's website may be visited at <http://www.iupui.edu/~micro/brutkiewicz.html>.)

(6) Has your service on the MAC changed you? *I certainly have a better picture as to how far we need to go in enhancing opportunities and ensuring appropriate recognition for the accomplishments of minority immunologists. We do have strong support from Dr. Michele Hogan and the rest of the AAI, as well as generous financial support from the NIGMS. We'll get there.*

(7) How can other members of the AAI participate in the MAC's mission? *Tap individuals from our minority list to include as speakers and session Chairs at their institutions and at meetings. Two years ago, not one person on our committee had ever served in either role at an AAI meeting (in something other than a MAC-sponsored event).*

(8) How can we increase the number of minority immunologists as part of our regular membership in the AAI? *Start with our younger colleagues (trainees); give them the true picture, provide opportunities and pass them the baton.*

(9) What would you like to do beyond your service on the MAC? *Outside of my own research program, I would like to expand my efforts in the development of junior faculty, helping to enhance their success. This would hopefully include (but not be restricted to) minority faculty in that group.*

(10) Where do you see the MAC in five years? *Playing a more significant and effective role in enhancing*

opportunities for minority trainees in networking, career advice, etc., with majority immunologists benefiting as well.

Dr. Brutkiewicz's colleagues on the AAI Minority Affairs Committee, pictured at right, include:

Prosper N. Boyaka, Ph.D. (09) -- The Ohio State University
<http://www.vet.ohio-state.edu/ProsperBoyaka.htm>

Margaret S. Bynoe, Ph.D. (10) -- Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine
www.vet.cornell.edu/public/microbiology/Bynoe.htm

Gregory B. Carey, Ph.D. (10) -- University of Maryland, School of Medicine
<http://medschool.umaryland.edu/facultyresearchprofile/viewprofile.aspx?id=8026>

Kristine M. Garza, Ph.D. (08) -- University of Texas at El Paso
<http://academics.utep.edu/biology>

James W. Lillard, Jr., Ph.D., M.B.A. (10) -- University of Louisville
<http://browncancercenter.org/research/researcher.aspx?id=1771>

Manuel L. Penichet, M.D., Ph.D. (09) -- University of California, Los Angeles
http://www.cancer.mednet.ucla.edu/institution/personnel?personnel_id=105494

Luis J. Sigal, D.V.M., Ph.D. (09) -- Fox Chase Cancer Center
<http://www.fccc.edu/research/pid/sigal/> and <http://www.med.upenn.edu/camb/faculty/mv/sigal.html>

Eduardo M. Sotomayor, M.D. (08) -- H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute
<http://www.moffitt.usf.edu/Site.aspx?spid=F198C2D5EE5448D59C639BDDD7D025A7&SearchType=Researcher>

For more information about the activities of the AAI Minority Affairs Committee (MAC), visit <http://aai.org/committees/minority/minority2.htm>.



Prosper Boyaka



Margaret Bynoe



Gregory Carey



Kristine Garza



James Lillard



Manuel Penichet



Luis Sigal



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