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Oak Crest Team Takes Center Stage at Scientific Conference



Dr. John Moss, senior faculty at Oak Crest, presents research findings at the HIVR4P Conference, Oct. 17-21, 2016 in Chicago, IL.

Scientists from the Oak Crest Institute of Science and their research partners on their National Institutes of Health (NIH) U19 grant are continuing to establish themselves as leaders in HIV prevention. The group recently returned from Chicago, IL, where they presented a total of 10 scientific papers at the prestigious HIVR4P (Research for Prevention) Conference.

As the premier global and scientific conference focused on HIV prevention research, the HIVR4P attracts researchers, advocates, clinicians, policy makers, private sector partners and public health officials from all over the world. The conference program includes oral presentations and poster sessions on the latest research in HIV prevention science.

"We were honored to be asked to share so much of our research with colleagues from around the world. Presenting multiple oral papers at meetings such as this is an important recognition of the influence of our work," says Dr. Marc M. Baum, president and senior faculty at Oak Crest.

HIVR4P is the world's first and only scientific meeting dedicated exclusively to biomedical HIV prevention research, including antiretroviral-based (AVR) prevention (treatment as prevention, microbicides, and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)); vaccines; circumcision; and related areas of HIV prevention.

This year's event attracted 1,500 leaders in HIV prevention research, programs and policy. Among them were 10 members of the Oak Crest/NIH U19 Program team comprised of researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the University of Texas Medical Branch, Johns Hopkins Medical, the University of Colorado, Boulder, Scripps Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles, Vanderbilt University and Miriam Hospital.

News & Events

Monrovia Greets Oak Crest

The city of Monrovia recently welcomed Oak Crest to the area by running a feature article on the lab in the hometown newspaper, Monrovia Weekly. The city of Monrovia is located just eight miles east of Pasadena and is known for its small town charm. The city is also becoming known for its growing collection of high tech industries including the Oak Crest Institute of Science. [Click here](#) to read more about the exciting research taking place in Monrovia's newest science lab!

Seminars at Oak Crest

As part of their ongoing commitment to science education, Oak Crest hosts monthly seminars for their research fellows and volunteers on a variety of environmental and biomedical topics.

Organized by Dr. Paul Webster, Oak Crest Senior Faculty, upcoming seminars are scheduled for: January 4, February 1 and March 1. Potential speakers include Michael Russell, Ph.D., NASA (February 1); Isik Kaniik, JPL; Jan Ahmend, USC; Laurie Barge, JPL, and Marc Rayman, NASA.

All seminars will held at 4 p.m. in

Information presented by the Oak Crest contingent focused on the development and successes of a novel intravaginal ring (IVR) used for HIV PrEP. This innovative drug delivery device is capable of releasing multiple antiretroviral drugs simultaneously at a controlled rate. Known as a “pod-IVR”, Oak Crest scientists and their colleagues have successfully tested the rings in both pigtail macaque monkeys and sheep.

In June of this year, Oak Crest successfully demonstrated for the first time that two powerful AVR drugs, tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (known as TDF) and emtricitabine (known as FTC), could provide complete protection against sexually transmitted HIV when delivered topically by the sustained release pod-IVR device. This new technology, now under its clinical trial period, will allow women all over the world, to be protected from sexually transmitted HIV possibly for up to 90 days at a time.

“It’s very gratifying to share our success stories with other researchers who are dedicated to putting a stop to HIV,” says Dr. Baum. “Our experience in the lab may help speed up the development of additional forms of HIV prevention techniques, potentially saving thousands of lives each year,” he adds.

The HIVR4P Conference strongly supports exchange of ideas among research on HIV vaccines, microbicides, PrEP treatment as prevention, and other biomedical prevention approaches. The biennial event also provides a venue to discuss the research findings, questions, and priorities that are specific to each modality. HIVR4P responds to a growing consensus that effective HIV prevention will require a combination of approaches and unprecedented collaboration between fields of research. One thing appears certain . . . Oak Crest will play a key role in these efforts.

Oak Crest Moves to New Facilities



Movers carefully remove lab equipment from the old Oak Crest facility during relocation to the city of Monrovia.

For anyone who has ever moved, you know it is no easy feat. Imagine if you can, moving an entire science research lab with millions of dollars in sensitive equipment and groundbreaking research projects that could not be replicated if damaged or destroyed during a move! That’s what the faculty and staff at Oak Crest faced this spring as they completed their move from Pasadena to Monrovia.

Located at 132 W. Chestnut Ave., just one block from Old Town Monrovia, the new Oak Crest facilities underwent

extensive tenant improvements prior to the move. The building was literally gutted, leaving only the exterior walls in place. Everything from floors to ceilings, wiring, plumbing, lighting and HVAC systems were replaced and/or reconfigured to maximize the use of every square foot of space and turn a dilapidated warehouse into state-of-the-art laboratories.

The new facilities were carefully designed to provide increased space for scientists and research fellows to meet and interact as well as larger space for seminars. In addition, the newly renovated building contains a dedicated classroom for educational programs for students from high school age through graduate school.

Plans are currently under way for a grand opening celebration at the new lab. Watch for future announcements on the Oak Crest [Facebook page](#) and our [website](#)!

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the conference room at Oak Crest. Please follow us on [Facebook](#) for additional seminar updates.

Research Fellowship Program Completed

In keeping with Oak Crest’s mission to cultivate tomorrow’s scientists one individual at a time, seven more names have been added to the list of those who have completed The Rose Hills Research Fellowship Program at Oak Crest (OCIS).

Started in 2011 as a pilot program for community college students who wanted to gain hands-on scientific research experience, the Rose Hills Research Fellowship Program has provided 30 young scientists with what may very well be the educational opportunity of a lifetime. Funded by The Rose Hills Foundation, and offered exclusively to community college students, the research Fellowships allow students to participate in environmental science projects currently underway at Oak Crest. The projects range from microbial ecology, to natural products research and atmospheric chemistry.

Fifty-three local community college students applied for the seven Fellowship positions available for the 2015-2016 program. The students began their research at Oak Crest in December 2015 and spent the next six months working under the mentorship of Drs. Marc Baum, John Moss and Paul Webster, senior faculty at OCIS, and Manjula Gunawardana, senior scientist at Oak Crest. The Fellowships concluded in July 2016 with presentations of the students’ research findings at The Rose Hills Foundation Fellows Seminar Day. The event was held at The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens.

The 2015/2016 Rose Hills Research Fellows included:

- Chelsi Abaya - Citrus College
- Edwin Chavez - PCC
- Sylvia Cruz - PCC
- Joel Monroy - PCC
- Docnary Reyes - PCC
- Karla Ruiz - Citrus College

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• Miranda Sanchez - Citrus College

"The Rose Hills Research Fellowship Program has been a huge success," says Dr. Baum. "Ninety-three percent of the graduates from the program have gone on to four-year universities to complete their academic studies in science, engineering, or related fields. We are very proud of these students and are confident they will continue to make their mark in the fields of chemistry, biology, engineering, or medicine," he adds.

[Past Rose Hills Research Fellows](#)

are currently completing their undergraduate studies at four-year schools including University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Davis, University of California, Riverside, and University of California, Los Angeles. Several students from the first few Fellowship years are currently completing their graduate studies at University of California, Riverside School of Medicine, the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Southern California School of Pharmacy.

Attention Rose Hills Alumni

If you are a graduate of our past [Rose Hills Research Fellowship Program](#), we want to hear from you! Please take a few minutes today to email [Sherry Tsai](#) to let her know what you've been up to since leaving Oak Crest!

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Oak Crest Institute of Science
132 W. Chestnut Ave., Monrovia, CA 91016
USA

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Symposium Presentation

Dr. Marc M. Baum, senior faculty at Oak Crest, was a featured speaker at the 33rd Succulent Plants Symposium held at The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. The event, held Sept. 3, 2016, attracted succulent experts from across the United States and Mexico. Dr. Baum's talk entitled "Unraveling the Microbial Ecology of Euphorbia Plant Latex" was based on [ongoing research](#) at Oak Crest and a paper published in the [American Journal of Botany](#).

The annual symposium focused on conservation, cryopreservation, and the evolutionary adaptations of cactus anatomy.