

## **WELCOME** to the Kong Research Group of the Dermatology Branch, CCR, NCI, NIH!

The goal of our research group is to develop an efficient and highly productive clinical research group focusing on skin microbiome research. This requires a concerted team effort from a diverse group of individuals.

The purpose of this document is to communicate important information regarding the research group. Although I believe that everything in this document may be applicable to you, some things may apply more or less to you than to others, i.e., to different degrees. As you read through this, please keep in mind that it was prepared to be directed to a group of individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds and training.

In general, I'm a "hands-on" person. I will give more freedom as I sense your comfort level, reliability, and expertise with a particular responsibility.

- **FELLOWS/TRAINEES:** The foremost objective of the fellows program is to provide scientific training while you contribute to the goals of the skin microbiome research program and advance your career. In addition to learning how to perform clinical and translational research, an important goal for you should be to develop excellent communication skills that will promote your advancement within biomedical science. This involves becoming a contributor who can present his/her own work, and a listener who can offer and accept constructive criticism. Thus, participation in lab meetings, seminars, and abstract and manuscript preparation, as well as journal and manuscript reviews will constitute an important part of your training. This communication provides you with guidance as to what will be expected of you—and what you can expect—during your time here. Meeting this challenge should provide you with a good foundation towards your clinical research career.
- **EMPLOYEES:** You form the central core of this research group, which strives to maintain its position in excellence in skin microbiome research. Your contributions are vital to the success of our group and serve as the continuity for this research program year after year. In addition to promote this group's research goals, an important goal for you should be to continue your professional development. I encourage you to think about what your professional development goals are and to discuss them with me. Toward this goal, I am supportive of your identifying opportunities to enhance your professional development as long as they promote rather than detract from the primary purpose of our research group.

### **CONDUCT OF RESEARCH**

You are expected to maintain the highest level of scientific integrity. Formal discussions of ethics related to scientific issues occur in a group meeting format annually; your attendance is mandatory. Honesty, constructive criticism, and responsibility are expected of you and your coworkers, and you should know what to do or whom to contact if something goes wrong. You may find such information in "Guidelines for the Conduct of Research in the Intramural Program at NIH" (<http://www.nih.gov/campus/irnews/guidelines.htm>) that discusses such things as: Responsibilities of Research Supervisors and Trainees, Data Management, Publication Practices, Authorship, Peer Review and Privileged Information, Collaborations and Financial Conflicts of Interest. This is a general but useful source of information and is required reading. In general, if something goes wrong, go to your supervisor (me) first, or another Derm Branch PI, or the Branch Chief, Dr. Mark Udey.

Please remember that research protocols and details associated with the protocols can be considered intellectual property. This information should not be shared with others unless you have obtained my approval. I have seen protocols accidentally routed to a competitor. Please treat protocol material and especially patient material as confidential.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF WORK HABITS; THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF TIME**

In addition to providing training, the Kong Research Group is responsible for maintaining a competitive clinical research program whose progress will be monitored regularly and funded according to its productivity. Everyone's efforts are of paramount importance to our success.

You are expected to spend your time performing protocol-related work, evaluating patients, and evaluating or discussing data in a professional manner. If you aren't busy, you may be distracting others. If you are away, I will notice. I believe in a positive cohesive working environment.

- My core work hours are 8:15-5pm. I prefer that your schedule overlap with mine as much as possible, because this increases opportunities for us to communicate. I expect that individuals are present between most of the core hours of 8:30am-5pm.
- I typically go "off-line" until ~9pm. I am often working from 9-11:30pm.
- If I don't respond to an e-mail readily, I am available by phone. Please check my schedule to ensure that I'm not with a patient or in a meeting.
- I am sporadically available on the weekend. If you need a response to an issue over the weekend, please let me know in advance. I want to ensure that I am able to respond in a timely manner.
- During the week, I am accessible in person and via e-mail and pager. I generally respond to an e-mail within a day. Please feel free to re-send your e-mail again if you haven't had a response in 1-2 days. At times, I may be conducting some research to better answer your question.

Please ask if you want to meet with me or need my help. I often accomplish much work outside of traditional work hours and I will be enthusiastically supportive to see you do the same. Use your time well, work efficiently, put in productive hours: strong efforts on your part will be noted most positively.

#### **STAFF/LAB MEETINGS**

- Weekly clinic staff meetings are on Mondays at 9am in the OP13 conference room. This meeting reviews topics related to clinic operations, NIH Derm Grand Rounds (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month), attending coverage, vacations, conferences, rotating residents, etc. The clinic nurses will draft the agenda and should be notified if topics need to be added to the agenda.
- The Derm Clinical Research meetings are on Mondays beginning at 11:30am in the OP13 conference room. We review progress of clinical protocols and address potential shifts in focus or implementation. This meeting is followed by a noon meeting with the data managers from Harris (contractor who supports NCI-CCR data management). The data meeting examines progress of data inputting, adverse events, etc. One of the research nurses drafts the agenda.
- The clinical skin microbiome research group (Kong Research Group and Julie Segre) meets on Thursdays at 12:30pm in the OP13 conference room. We review recruiting, protocol/regulatory, sampling, and goals for the clinical protocols. One of the research nurses drafts the agenda.
- Fellows in the Kong Research Group are expected to attend the Segre lab meeting every other Tuesday at 1 PM in the fourth floor conference room of Building 49. The Segre lab meeting lasts approximately 1.5 hours and takes place year round. This is an informal meeting when each postdoc/fellow in the Kong and Segre groups presents their work/progress/challenges. There is opportunity to discuss analyzed data, to visualize the central findings, etc. This is a private meeting and all topics discussed are considered confidential.
- There is an annual mandatory "All-Hands" meeting for Derm Branch members to discuss any issues relevant to the entire Branch.

#### **JOURNAL CLUBS**

- The Derm Branch weekly basic science journal club is held Fridays at 8:10am in Room 13S235 of Bldg 10. Each Derm Branch PI, fellow, rotating resident, student, and lab tech will present one article for discussion each Friday on a rotating basis.
- Clinical journal club is held on the last Wednesday of each month in CRC 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, 3-2550. Two articles are presented each time. Derm Branch PIs, PA/NPs, clinical fellows, dermatology lab fellows, rotating residents and students are expected to attend and participate in the rotating roster of presenters. Research nurses are encouraged to attend and can opt to participate in the roster of presenters.

## **LEAVE**

It is expected that all leave requests must be approved. Before you make travel plans, please discuss this with me. I place quality patient care as a high priority, and we must, therefore, ensure that a plan for proper coverage of potential patient care issues is in place. All MDs in the branch will rotate holiday coverage, and the branch clinical research nurses will also rotate holiday coverage outside of the federal holidays.

## **PROFESSIONALISM/E-MAIL ETIQUETTE**

I strongly believe in professional behavior in the workplace. All individuals—from cleaning personnel to institute directors—deserve respect. I support an environment where individuals feel able to perform their work activities to the best of their abilities. If you ever feel that there has been disrespect directed at you, please come talk to me.

I expect a response to my e-mails in a timely manner (approximately 1 day). Even if you do not have an answer to my question, I would like an estimated time that you might have an answer. Please use e-mail professionally. Be aware that sometimes individuals may be bcc'd or that sometimes we accidentally hit "Reply to all" vs "Reply."

Turn on your out-of-office automatic response if you are sick/on vacation and do not plan to respond to e-mail. When you use your out-of-office notification, please designate who is covering and include their contact information in your automatic reply.

## **EVALUATIONS**

I evaluate all research group members every 6 months. Additional evaluation on a formal or informal basis can be performed on a quarterly basis if requested by either party. Fellows are expected to function with increasing independence over time, and to assume additional responsibility for our work. Increased independence should never be confused with a lack of accountability. Everyone must be accountable, always.

You should be aware that I am often asked to evaluate people before and after they leave our group, specifically by potential employers and fund-granting agencies. It is not uncommon to be asked to rank a candidate in several categories. A typical "Reference Report Form" includes:

- Knowledge in the chosen field
- Motivation and perseverance toward goals including "work ethic"
- Ability to work independently
- Ability to work as a member of a research team
- Ability to plan and conduct research
- Ability in oral expression
- Ability in written expression
- Imagination and probable creativity
- Communication skills.

They also ask for ranking, i.e., top 2%, top 5%, top 10%, top 25% of fellows, etc. It is helpful to keep these items, and your responsibilities, in mind during your training, and always to conduct yourself as professionally as possible.

## **MONEY AND PROPERTY**

Most items that require purchasing must be submitted through the online POTS (Purchase Order Tracking System) system. Jeanie Lagrave is the branch purchasing agent who works offsite but is available by e-mail (and sometimes phone). All purchases will be routed to me for approval. Do not pay for things personally and expect to be paid back. There is no 'petty cash' option with the gov't.

You cannot take a computer or other device (projector) off campus without an issued property pass (contact Harry Schaefer).

**ATTENDING OUTSIDE MEETINGS** is important, not only to hear recent developments before their publication, but also to allow others to get to know you and your work. I am happy to use funds to support travel for fellows who

have submitted an abstract to FARE (see below, win or lose; however, FARE recipients get additional free travel money), on condition that you submit an abstract for talk or poster presentation at the meeting. This usually involves submitting an abstract describing the work to be presented to the meeting coordinators at the time of registration. I encourage employees to consider attending a meeting each year for professional development.

Travel while you are paid by the government is NOT easy. Several details will require your attention as soon as possible.

- You must start by discussing potential meetings with me.
- After obtaining approval, there are several items that need to be addressed in a timely manner:
  - Travel order (you will need the help of the Branch admin, Keisha Martin; she will want the travel dates, hotel reservation, meeting information)
  - Flight reservation (through Omega): You are not allowed to take more than 1 annual leave day in conjunction with your travels. For international travel, there are minor variations and also requirements for a government-issued passport.
  - Meeting/conference registration: Do **not** pay for any meeting registration out-of-pocket. The branch purchasing agent (Jeanie Lagrave) processes payment for registration after the order is placed in POTS.
  - Hotel: The exception to paying out-of-pocket is hotel costs for outside meetings/conferences. Be aware of the per diem for the city you are traveling to. There is a limit to what the government will pay for a hotel in each city. If you book a hotel that is more expensive than the per diem rate, you will pay the remainder out-of-pocket. PLEASE keep receipts and you will be reimbursed after your return and after you submit the appropriate paperwork to Keisha.

#### **CHARTING AND NOTEBOOK/RECORD KEEPING**

Proper and thorough charting/record keeping is vital to effective and efficient research. Patient notes should be submitted within 24 hours. Lab notebooks are expected to be organized. I am supportive of team members using their own system of organization as long as notes can be easily found and referenced.

#### **AUTHORSHIP & COLLABORATIONS**

If you are submitting an abstract for a meeting, please send it to me at least 2 weeks in advance for approval. If it's an abstract that you've submitted previously, please still let me know. Sometimes there are authorship or other considerations based on who else is attending the meeting. When you make a significant intellectual or experimental contribution to a project, then you will typically be an author on the manuscript. However, there have often been considerable resources devoted to a project before you ever receive the samples/data to analyze (e.g., development of an IRB approved protocol, recruitment of patients). Even if others do not contribute a figure to a paper, they may also deserve authorship. Authorship (including order of authors) is always discussed before a manuscript is submitted from the lab.

Before you enter into collaboration with a member from another research group, speak with me first and certainly refer the potential collaborator to me. Although it is not required that you speak with me before you make a request of others, I prefer that you send me a draft of the request before you send it to the outside researcher. Requests by others for materials/information from our group must be discussed with me before they are distributed. If there is a misunderstanding or a conflict with a collaborator – talk to me. Remember that the lab may have multiple interactions with this lab or individual that could be impacted. We might also have a history with this individual that helps to explain what you perceive to be an odd response.

I believe in an open-door policy. I encourage you to always feel free to come to me with any concerns or questions.

Thanks,  
Heidi