

June 18-19: The International Biomedical Research Alliance announces Nobel Prize Winners Harold Varmus and Phillip A. Sharp to speak at National Institutes of Health Oxford/Cambridge Scholars Program

The 6th Annual Colloquium will be held on the main NIH campus in Bethesda, with Thursday Colloquium dinner to be held at the Pooks Hill Marriott in Bethesda, Md.

Media Advisory

BETHESDA, Md./EWorldWire/June 17, 2008 --- Two of the nation's most esteemed biomedical researchers - both Nobel prize award recipients - will serve as keynote speakers during the 6th annual National Institutes of Health (NIH) Oxford/Cambridge Scholars Program Colloquium to be held June 18 and 19 in Bethesda on the main NIH campus.

Dr. Harold Varmus, former Director of the National Institutes of Health and co-recipient of a 1989 Nobel Prize for studies of the genetic basis of cancer, and Dr. Phillip Sharp, an American geneticist and molecular biologist who co-discovered gene splicing and shared the 1993 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, will address a large group of students and scientists during the two-day Colloquium. Various scholars will be presenting their work in oral and poster presentations to senior scientists from the NIH and from the U.K. partner universities.

Dr. Varmus' Colloquium address is scheduled for Wednesday from 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. when he will speak on the topic of Open Access: A New Type of Medical Literature. In an article he published this past April on the Public Library of Science Web site (Progress toward Public Access to Science), Dr. Varmus wrote, "The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is about to cross an important threshold. Starting April 7, the authors of research reports that describe work supported by the NIH will be required to deposit accepted manuscripts into PubMed Central (PMC), the NIH's public digital library of full-text articles, with the understanding that the articles will be freely available for all to view no later than 12 months after publication. Most obviously, it further accelerates the worldwide movement toward greater access to the scientific literature, markedly increasing the number of articles freely available online. By taking this step, the NIH will join other funding agencies - including the Wellcome Trust, the U.K. Research Councils, the European Research Council, and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute - all of which have recently required their investigators to deposit publications in PMC or equivalent public libraries, such as UKPMC, within six months to a year. Since NIH-supported investigators publish about 80,000 papers each year, many of them in journals that currently do not contribute their articles to PMC, the library will soon grow at about twice its already impressive rate."

Dr. Phillip A. Sharp will deliver a keynote address, "A personal view of the biology of RNA," Thursday evening at 7:30 p.m. during the Colloquium dinner to be held at the Pooks Hill Marriott in Bethesda, Md., close to the NIH campus. Dr. Sharp is Institute Professor (highest academic rank) at the David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research (formerly the Center for Cancer Research) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1993 for his landmark work on the molecular biology of gene expression relevant to cancer and the mechanisms of RNA splicing. His lab has now turned its attention to understanding how RNA molecules act as switches to turn genes on and off (RNA interference). These newly discovered processes have revolutionized cell biology and could potentially generate a new class of therapeutics.

Dr. Sharp has authored over 360 scientific papers. His work has earned him numerous cancer research awards and presidential and national scientific board appointments. He is an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine. He is also the recipient of the Gairdner Foundation International Award, the Lasker Basic Medical Research Award, the National Medal of Science and the Inaugural Double Helix Medal for Scientific Research from Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. Dr. Sharp earned a B.A. degree from Union College, Ky., and a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Illinois. He is the co-founder of Biogen (now Biogen Idec) and Alnylam Pharmaceuticals and serves on the boards of both companies.

The NIH-Oxford-Cambridge Scholars program is an accelerated, individualized doctoral training program for outstanding science students committed to biomedical research. It enables students to undertake a collaborative project in any area of biomedical investigation involving two mentors, one at the NIH intramural campus in Bethesda, Md., and one at either Oxford or Cambridge University.

The program currently enrolls approximately 100 of the nation's most promising aspiring biomedical researchers who are pursuing their doctoral degrees through the international collaborative program initiated in

2001 by NIH senior scientist, Dr. Michael Lenardo. Students conduct research at both locations and potentially other sites, including field work in Africa and elsewhere around the world. All students participate in the enriched environment of the residential colleges of the U.K. Universities and enjoy special educational opportunities that develop their understanding of disease outcomes and policy issues related to their studies. The projects culminate in the award of a D.Phil. or Ph.D. in science from either Oxford or Cambridge. Students may also pursue combined M.D./Ph.D. training through partnerships the program maintains with a broad range of American medical schools. Additional information about the NIH Oxford/Cambridge Scholars Program can be found at '<http://oxcam.gpp.nih.gov>'.

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KEYWORDS: NIH, National Institutes of Health, NIH/Oxford/Cambridge Scholars Program, National Institute of Health, medical, health, healthcare research, education, advanced education, science education, biotech, biomedical research

SOURCE: International Biomedical Research Alliance

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