

## National Human Genome Research Institute Director to Step Down



*Francis S. Collins, MD, PhD*

Francis S. Collins, MD, PhD, the director of the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), has stepped down as of August 1. Alan E. Guttmacher, M.D., pediatric geneticist and NHGRI deputy director has been named as acting director of NHGRI until the formal search process for a permanent director is completed.

Dr. Collins announced his intention to step down from the directorship in May of this year in order to pursue writing projects and other pro-

fessional opportunities. A physician-geneticist, Dr. Collins joined the NHGRI as director in 1993. During that same year, he founded an intramural program in genomics at NIH – the Division of Intramural Research – to develop and implement technology to understand, diagnose and treat genomic and genetic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, mental illness and various cancers. His efforts have yielded projects such as the Genes, Environment and Health Initiative and the Genetic Association Information Network. Dr. Collins led the Human Genome Project (HPG) to its fruition in 2003 and has since initiated and overseen a variety of follow-up projects in large-scale genomics. These include the Encyclopedia of DNA Elements; the International HapMap Project; the Mammalian Gene Collection; the Knockout Mouse Project; The Cancer Genome Atlas – a joint effort with the National Cancer Institute; and the Molecular Libraries Initiative and the Human Microbiome Project, both of which are part of the NIH Roadmap for Biomedical Research. The information derived from these projects has been made freely and readily available to the international scientific community, benefiting researchers around the globe. Additionally, Dr. Collins and his colleagues have discovered the genes for cystic fibrosis

and neurofibromatosis. His NHGRI intramural program has revealed new insights into the genesis, diagnosis and treatment of Hutchinson-Gilford progeria and type 2 diabetes. In order to continue this work with minimal interruption upon his departure, Dr. Collins will remain involved with his laboratory's efforts as an unpaid part-time "special volunteer." Dr. Lawrence Brody, PhD, an NHGRI senior investigator, has been appointed to formally supervise the laboratory upon Dr. Collins' departure.

Dr. Collins has also worked to address the social, ethical and legal implications of genome research. He has been a proponent of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008, which recently became law 13 years after it was introduced to Congress. The law protects Americans from discrimination in employment and health insurance based on their genetic information.

Dr. Collins received his undergraduate education at the University of Virginia. He completed a PhD in physical chemistry from Yale University and medical training from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. After completing a fellowship in human genetics at Yale, he joined the faculty of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where he served until he assumed the role as NHGRI director.

## University of Texas System Names Sole Finalist for Presidency of UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas



*Daniel K. Podolsky, MD*  
Courtesy of Massachusetts General Hospital

Daniel K. Podolsky, MD, was named by the University of Texas System Board of Regents as the sole finalist for the presidency at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas in announcement on May 27. Such an appointment can be fi-

nalized after a mandated period of no less than 21 days after a finalist or finalisits is/are named. He will succeed Dr. Kern Wildenthal, who has served as UT Southwestern's president since 1986. Prior to his appointment as president, Dr. Wildenthal was dean of the medical school for a decade. He will remain on the faculty and focus his efforts on philanthropic endeavors on behalf of the medical center.

After Dr. Wildenthal announced his plan to step down in September of this year, a 15-member advisory committee helped guide the search process and a national firm was engaged to identify and select a number of prospective successors. The advisory committee narrowed this number to form the group of candidates from which the regents named Dr. Podolsky as sole finalist. An internationally renowned physician scientist, Dr. Podolsky has authored more than 300 research and review articles and is an expert in gastroenterology, focusing on inflammatory bowel disease. He has served at Har-

vard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) since he began his career in 1989. At MGH, Dr. Podolsky has served as chief of gastroenterology and, for the past three years, he has also served as chief academic officer of Partners HealthCare, which was founded in 1994 by MGH and Brigham and Women's Hospital – a role in which he oversees a \$1 billion research enterprise as well as graduate medical education at both hospitals. He serves on the board of directors and audit committee of Glaxo-SmithKline and is a past president of the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA). He earned his undergraduate degree from Harvard College and his medical degree from Harvard Medical School. In 2007, Dr. Podolsky received the AGA Distinguished Achievement Award, which recognizes “an individual who has made a major specific accomplishment in clinical or basic research in gastroenterology or an allied field that advances gastroenterology.” (<http://www.gastro.org>)



*Robert H. Brown Jr., MD, DPhil*  
Courtesy of University of Massachusetts Medical School

## University of Massachusetts (UMass) Medical School and UMass Memorial Medical Center Appoint New Chair

Internationally renowned physician-scientist, Robert H. Brown Jr., MD, DPhil, has accepted the appointment of chair of the Department of Neurology at the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) and UMass Memorial Medical Center. Dr. Brown is scheduled to assume his role as head of these academic and clinical neurology departments in October of this year, and has already collaborated with UMass scientists who are working to develop an RNAi-based approach to treat neurodegenerative diseases.

Dr. Brown's work on the inherited basis of neurodegenerative and neuromuscular diseases has produced seminal discoveries associated with the genetics of neurodegenerative diseases, such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and neuromuscular disorders, including some types of muscular dystrophy. In 1993, Dr. Brown and his colleagues identified the genetic basis for familial ALS.

A graduate of Amherst College and Harvard Medical School, Dr. Brown completed his doctoral training in neurophysiology at Oxford

University and trained in Neurology at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), where he has served for three decades. At MGH, Dr. Brown founded The Day Neuromuscular Research Laboratory, which is dedicated

to investigating neuromuscular diseases including Miyoshi myopathy, periodic paralysis, adrenoleukodystrophy and ALS. He currently serves as Director of The Day Neuromuscular Research Laboratory and the Mus-

cular Dystrophy Association Clinic at MGH and is a professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Brown is an inducted member of the Institute of Medicine and the American Neurological Association.

## Indiana University School of Medicine Appoints First Eli Lilly and Co. Professor of Pediatric Diabetes



*Raghu Mirmira, MD, PhD*

Indiana University School of Medicine has appointed Raghu Mirmira, MD, PhD, as its first Eli Lilly and Co. Professor as well as director of the Pediatric Diabetes Re-

search Group in the Herman B. Wells Center for Pediatric Research. He will also treat patients at Riley Hospital for Children. A pioneer in gene therapy diabetes research and an expert in the area of islet cell gene research, Dr. Mirmira's research efforts have focused on "reprogramming" other cells in the body to produce insulin and thus serve as a source of beta cells for individuals with diabetes.

Dr. Mirmira earned his undergraduate, MD and PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Chicago. After completing postdoctoral training at the University of California, San Francisco, he joined the faculty of the University of Virginia in 2000, where he was associate professor of medicine, endocrinology and metabolism. He serves on research review committees for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), American Diabetes Association (ADA) and the Endocrine Soci-

ety. In 2004, Dr. Mirmira received the Thomas R. Lee Career Development Award from the ADA – an honor awarded to the ADA Career Development Award applicant receiving the highest reviewer score on his/her application in a given fiscal year. Not only does the award recognize excellence in diabetes research, it also signifies the ADA's belief that the recipient will make significant research contributions impacting the treatment, investigation in the search for a cure, or prevention of diabetes. That same year, he was also awarded a Discovery Health Channel Medical Honor. Additional awards include the Physician Postdoctoral Fellowship Award from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and a Research Career Award from the NIH. His research has been supported by NIH and JDRF awards, and his current laboratory of 8 scientists includes MD and PhD fellows and graduate students.

## Northwestern Names New Chair of Department of Medicine



*Doug Vaughan, MD*

Doug Vaughan, MD, was named the Irving S. Cutter Professor and Chair of the Department of Medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg

School of Medicine and Northwestern Memorial Hospital, effective June 1 of this year. Prior to his appointment at Northwestern, Dr. Vaughan served as a faculty member at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and as attending physician at the university's medical center since 1993. He held the C. Sidney Burwell Professor of Medicine endowed chair and role of Chief of the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine from 1999 until his departure. During his tenure at Vanderbilt, Dr. Vaughan directed research focused on the role of the plasminogen activator system in cardiovascular disease and led the school's participation in the Cardiac Cell Therapy Research Network, sponsored by the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI). His areas of research also include the biochemistry and molecular biology of mammalian fibrinolysis, regulation of vascular gene expression, and tissue remodeling.

Dr. Vaughan served as a permanent member of the NHLBI Experimental Cardiovascular Science Study Section and, from 2003 to 2004, as chair of the NHLBI Vascular Cell and Molecular Biology Study Section. He received his medical training at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School and completed his residency at Parkland Memorial Hospital and Veteran's Affairs Medical Center in 1984, where he also served as chief resident. He trained in cardiology at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. He completed a research fellowship in medicine at Harvard and a clinical fellowship in interventional cardiology at Brigham, as well as a fellowship in the Center for Thrombosis and Vascular Research at the University of Leuven in Belgium. He is an elected member of the American Society of Clinical Investigation, the Association of University Cardiologists, and the Association of American Professors.