



1023 Millmont Street, PO Box 400870, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4870
www.virginia.edu/aginginstitute uvaging@virginia.edu (434) 243-5695

Prize-Winning Aging Expert Speaks at Omni Hotel

On May 9th, Dr. Robert Butler, co-founder and CEO of the International Longevity Center, founding Director of the National Institute on Aging, Pulitzer Prize winner, and recipient of the Heinz Award for the Human Condition, spoke to an audience of 125 at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville. His talk, titled "Do Health and Longevity Create Wealth?", was fascinating and prompted many questions by the audience. Dr. Butler was a principal investigator of one of the first interdisciplinary, comprehensive, longitudinal studies of healthy community-residing older persons, conducted at the National Institute of Mental Health. The study found that much of what is attributed to old age is in fact a function of disease, social-economic adversity and even personality. This work also set the stage for the later concepts of "productive aging" and "successful aging."

Interview with 2006 Pilot Project Award Recipients

On May 18th, the Institute on Aging hosted a lunch to recognize the 2006 recipients of its pilot grant program during which Institute on Aging staff members were able to speak with the investigators about each of their projects.

Dr. Blackman, of the Dept. of Biomedical Engineering, specializes in cardiovascular disease while Dr. Berger studies the mechanical aspect of function in the Dept. of Civil Engineering. In this project, they will study the spatial distributions of lipid rafts across the plasma membrane and the cumulative effects of these rafts, which are rich in signaling proteins and affect the ability of blood vessels to dilate and constrict. (Continued on page 3)

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Shenk Includes UVA in Book Tour

David Shenk, author of *The Forgetting*, a book recently made into a PBS movie, spoke to an audience of 50 on April 3rd at UVA's Darden School. The event was co-sponsored by the Institute on Aging and the Central & Western Virginia Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, and was followed by a panel discussion featuring Kathleen Fuchs, Ph.D., a clinical neuropsychologist in the Department of Neurology at UVA, James M. Vitt, Esq., an elder law attorney, Jeanne McCusker, owner of Home Instead, a companionship and home care services provider, and Suzanne Brower, Director of Marketing at the Jefferson Area Board for Aging. Charlottesville was among ten cities across the nation included in the book tour.

WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU.....

WHAT TOPICS IN AGING DO YOU FIND MOST INTERESTING?

The Institute on Aging is currently planning events for the fall and winter seasons, and we welcome your ideas for program content. Please contact us with your ideas, and we will take them into consideration as we prepare our event schedule. As always, we appreciate any feedback and suggestions you would like to share with us regarding the Institute's general initiatives in the field of aging. Send your thoughts to us by e-mail at uvaging@virginia.edu, or call us at (434) 243-5695. We look forward to hearing from you!

Spring Aging 101 Series Draws Record Attendance

The Institute on Aging held its spring Aging 101 series on two dates in February and March at the Doubletree Hotel in Charlottesville. On February 28, Dr. Gene Block, Vice President and Provost and Professor of Biology at UVa, and Dr. Barry Condron, Professor of Biology at UVa, discussed the neurobiological changes that occur as we age with a record-breaking crowd totaling 165. On March 14, Dr. Eugene Barrett, Professor of Internal Medicine and Director of the Diabetes Center at UVa, and Dr. Casey Kerrigan, Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at UVa, spoke to an audience of 150 about the changes in muscles and metabolism that occur with aging. Both sets of lectures were followed by a reception during which audience members had the chance to talk with the speakers individually. The Institute on Aging's Summer Aging 101 is set for June 22nd, and will also take place at the Doubletree Hotel (see page 5).

Weltman to Give Keynote Talk

Dr. Art Weltman, Institute on Aging Advisory Board member, Professor of Human Services and Professor of Medicine, and Director of the Exercise Physiology Laboratories, was the invited speaker at the 9th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting in Stresa, Italy, in March 2006. Dr. Weltman spoke on the topic of "Single and combined effects of GH and testosterone in healthy older men." Dr. Weltman has also been invited to give a keynote address at the International Congress of Obesity Satellite Conference on Physical Activity and Obesity in Brisbane, Australia in September 2006. The data that he will present are on the effects of intensity of exercise training on outcome measures related to the metabolic syndrome of aging. This project was supported by the Institute on Aging.

Join the Fellows Society

During Older American's Month this past May, the Institute on Aging launched its first annual fund drive. The Institute seeks support to further its mission to enhance quality of life for seniors through aging-related research, education, and service. We have already begun to receive contributions from supporters who now have gained membership into the Institute's ***Fellows Society***. If you have not already joined the ***Fellows Society***, you may do so by making a gift of any amount to the Institute. Donations to the Institute are fully tax deductible and may be made in the form of cash, check, credit card, certificates of deposit, stocks and bonds, mutual funds, real estate, or personal property. All gifts made to the Institute on Aging support activities and initiatives focused on the goals of keeping people healthier, happier, and independent for as long as possible.

Benefits of ***Fellows Society*** membership will vary according to the donor's giving level and may include recognition as patrons of the Institute on Aging in publications, first notification of upcoming Institute events, reserved seating at events, invitations to special receptions with access to distinguished speakers, and invitations to luncheon events during which UVa faculty members will talk about their aging research. To learn more about joining the ***Fellows Society*** and the benefits of membership, please contact the Institute at (434) 243-5695 or at uvaging@virginia.edu.

Both investigators look forward to combining their expertise in this project and to achieving their goal of developing therapies to combat the negative effects of cholesterol.



*Row 1: Melissa Burns Cusato, Ann Gill Taylor, Kim Innes;
Row 2: Ed Berger, Brett Blackman, John Chirgwin,
and Jason Chruma*

Dr. Burns Cusato is completing a postdoctoral fellowship in the Dept. of Neuroscience. Dr. Burns Cusato works with an animal model of aging using transgenic mice. She will study anxiety and cognitive functioning in a rapidly aging mouse phenotype to determine whether rapidly aging mice are more depressed and have cognitive deficits. This project will allow her to study the behavior of the entire organism and tie together all of the work taking place in her lab. She is eager to gain an understanding of why emotional problems are common as we age and to develop mechanisms to avoid such problems.

Dr. Chruma is a faculty member in the Dept. of Chemistry, and will study osteoclasts, whose overactivity often causes age-related bone diseases like osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, and cancerous bone loss. Dr. Chruma stated that this project was an excellent opportunity to explore how stem cells in the bone marrow become osteoclasts and contribute to osteoporosis and other diseases. Dr. Chirgwin, a faculty member in the Dept. of Medicine, Division of Endocrinology, studies bone cancer metastasis, and is excited about the potential for preclinical drug development with the help of an outstanding chemistry department, adding that the capability for preclinical drug development is not available at most universities.

Dr. Innes is an Assistant Professor at the Center for the Study of Complementary & Alternative Therapies, and Dr. Taylor directs the Center and is also a professor in the School of Nursing. They will examine the effects of an 8-week yoga program on insulin sensitivity and related psychological and physiological measures of cardiovascular disease risk in older adults with Type 2 diabetes. The aim of this study is improved insulin sensitivity as well as reduction in related risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Dr. Innes was motivated to start this study by her long-standing interest in the origins and prevention of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and related insulin resistance conditions as a chronic disease epidemiologist, and by her concern regarding the rising prevalence of these conditions and the escalating costs of health care. Yoga may offer particular promise in the management of diabetes and prevention of cardiovascular disease, and may even reduce or eliminate the need for expensive drug treatments in certain people. Dr. Taylor added that helping relationships come naturally to the Center, and she has observed the extreme limitations posed by diabetes.

Each investigator was given the opportunity to give advice to older adults about aging well. Dr. Burns Cusato recommended that older adults “remain cognitively and mentally active, and engage mind as well as body.” Dr. Innes said “Do yoga!” and Dr. Taylor’s advice was to stay active, since healthy living promotes quality of life as one ages. For more information on these projects, please visit <http://www.virginia.edu/aginginstitute/research-pilot-2006.htm>.

UVa Demonstrates Strengths in the Aging Field across Disciplines

Advancements in the field of aging require collaboration among individuals with research backgrounds that span the disciplines. The Institute on Aging has assembled a scientific advisory board with faculty members that represent many disciplines throughout the University of Virginia. The Board consists of faculty from the colleges of Arts & Sciences, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Nursing, Education, and Architecture. These experts provide valuable guidance and direction for the Institute's programs and initiatives. In the article below, we introduce you to the research of one of our distinguished Advisory Board members.

Spotlight on Heidi Scrable, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Neuroscience, Institute on Aging Advisory Board Member



Heidi Scrable earned a Ph.D. in experimental medicine from McGill University and trained at the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research. She is the Ellison Medical Foundation Senior Scholar in Aging at the University of Virginia.

Ask Dr. Scrable how she became involved in the field of aging, and she may state it was “by accident.”

While a post-doctoral fellow, Dr. Scrable initially entered the research arena as a cancer geneticist, intrigued by why a defect in the p53 gene is responsible for many cancers. The p53 gene produces a protein that helps give damaged cells time to repair themselves before they divide. People who inherit a faulty version of the p53 gene have a higher risk of developing cancer because the damaged cells begin to accumulate. While working with animal models in her lab at UVa, Dr. Scrable found an intriguing connection between aging and cancer, which is nicely illustrated by mice in which a special mutation of the p53 gene is introduced. In the process of conducting cancer-related research, Scrable found that mice in which the p53 gene has been perturbed have increased tumor suppression, *and* interestingly enough, Scrable also found that these mice have reduced longevity. This finding could ultimately lead to very promising developments in her research lab, which now focuses on the role of the p53 gene in aging.

Dr. Scrable's research demonstrates that aging is not a random process, but rather there is a genetic program underlying the process of aging. She notes, “We are pretty much at a place that cancer biologists were a couple of decades ago, when the idea that cancer is a genetic disease was first accepted.” Her findings have suggested a pathway to identifying and manipulating “longevity” genes. Once she determines how p53 actually controls the aging process, the tools of molecular genetics may be used to help solve some of the mysteries of the aging process. For more information about Dr. Scrable's research, visit her website at:

www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/neurosci/Faculty/scrable/lab.cfm.

Funding Available

Ageing Research Dissertation Awards to Increase Diversity (R36)

The National Institute on Aging (NIA) announces the availability of dissertation awards (R36) in all areas of research within the Institute's mandate to increase the diversity of the research workforce on aging. These awards are available to qualified predoctoral students in accredited research doctoral programs in the United States. For more information: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-06-117.html>.

Participate in UVa Aging Research

The Gait Lab at UVa

We are conducting a study on how humans control their balance and are recruiting men and women without regard to ethnic or racial background, aged 65 years and older, who are able to stand and walk without assistance. Those who have heart or breathing problems, have suffered a stroke, who have diabetes, neuromotor disorders, problems with balance, falling, fainting, poor foot condition, or seizures will not be able to participate. Subjects will be paid \$50. For more information contact Jay Dicharry at (434) 243-5605, and mention that you are interested in "The Vibrating Shoe Study."

HIC:12266.

Memory Disorders Clinic at UVa

We are currently seeking participants for a project investigating the personality and behavioral changes that occur as we age. Participation involves filling out two questionnaires at home or in our lab regarding your spouse's changes over the last 5 years. The approximate time commitment is 20-30 minutes. You will not be paid for your participation, but you will further our knowledge about personality changes that occur during aging. If you are at least 50 years of age and are interested in participating in the project, please call (434) 243-5420 and ask to speak to Paula Damgaard or Dr. Mariecken Fowler to receive further information.

UVa Health System, Dept. of Internal Medicine, Division of General Medicine, Geriatrics and Palliative Care

We are currently seeking participants, ages 50 to 70, for a project investigating a complementary therapy for sleep disturbances. The purpose of the study is to determine if small magnetic pellets placed on acupoints on the external ear promotes improvement in sleep and quality of life. If you have complaints about your sleep three or more nights per week for at least a month and are interested in participating please call (434)-284-0151 or email yih3e@virginia.edu.

Ask for Virginia Hisghman, Ph.D. for further information. Principal Investigator: Justine Owens, Ph.D., IRB-HSR # 12268

Salthouse Cognitive Aging Lab

We are currently seeking participants for a project investigating the relations among age, memory, and other cognitive abilities in adults of different ages. Participation involves performing a variety of different activities in our laboratory on three separate sessions, and completing several questionnaires at home, for a total of about 8 hours. You will be paid \$120 for your participation. If you are at least 18 years of age and are interested in participating in the project, please call (434) 982-6320 to receive further information.

Summer Aging 101 Scheduled for June

A special summer addition to the Institute on Aging's popular Aging 101 series has been scheduled for 3:00 p.m. on June 22nd at the Doubletree Hotel (990 Hilton Heights Road). UVa Psychology Professors Jonathan Haidt and Shige Oishi will each present lectures on the topic of "Happiness, Satisfaction with Life, and Aging." Dr. Haidt is the author of *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*, and is one of the leaders of the movement on positive psychology. Dr. Oishi is an internationally renowned expert on determinants of satisfaction with life, including cross-cultural comparisons. There is no admission fee, but you must RSVP by e-mail at uvaging@virginia.edu or by phone at (434) 243-5695 to reserve a space. For more information please visit the Institute on Aging website: <http://www.virginia.edu/aginginstitute/news.html>.