



# MINIM



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## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

### *Congratulations Dr. Raymond Habas*

**Raymond Habas** was awarded a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) entitled, "Wnt Signaling in Cellular Motility" in the amount of \$360,000 for three years. Funding will commence on February 15, 2006. Ray was 1 of 6 out of 94 applicants that received this grant.

### *Open Letter to the Dean*

*A letter was sent to Dean Paz and members of the Executive Council on January 3, 2006. Four aspects of this letter were discussed at the Executive Council meeting.*

Dear Hal,

I am writing to you regarding the first-page article about UMDNJ that was featured in the New York Times on December 30, 2005. The article was titled, "U.S. to Monitor Medical School in New Jersey", implying that Robert Wood Johnson Medical School is also involved in the health care fraud and other irregular administrative problems. (Financial problems). This article raises a number of concerns which I am sure that all of us at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School would like to have addressed.

1. **"The University had defrauded the federal and state governments of at least \$4.9 million in a scheme that involved the purposeful over billing of Medicaid. Senior administrators at the university were aware of the fraudulent billing for years, he (C.J. Christie; the US attorney for New Jersey) said, yet allowed it to continue until November 2004."**

- Is our medical school involved in this fraudulent activity or any other irregular activities? If so, was anyone in our medical school aware of this before these problems became publicized?
- An obvious question regarding this fraudulent activity is, "Who benefited from the \$4.9M?" It should be pointed out that this amount is roughly equal to the total amount of the very generous yearly bonuses given to high ranking senior administrators. The recent decision to eliminate the bonus program effective this year appears to implicate that the past bonus system had, indeed, been a problem.



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## Publications

Adelman, K., Wei, W., Ardehali, M.B., Werner, J., Zhu, B., **Reinberg, D.** and Liss, J.T. (2006) *Drosophila paf1* modulates chromatin structure at actively transcribed genes. *Mol. Cell. Biol.* **26**(1):250-60.

**Wang, Y-H.** (2006) Chromatin structure of human chromosomal fragile sites. *Cancer Lett.* **232**(1):70-8.

Zeng X, Tamai K, Doble B, Li S, Huang H, **Habas R.**, Okamura H, Woodgett J, He X. (2005) A dual-kinase mechanism for Wnt co-receptor phosphorylation and activation. *Nature.* **438**(7069):873-7.

Chen, C., Ware, S.M., Sato, A., Houston-Hawkins, D.E., **Habas, R.**, Matzuk, M.M., Shen, M.M. and Brown, C.W. (2006) The Vg1-related protein Gdf3 acts in a Nodal signaling pathway in the pre-gastrulation mouse embryo. *Development.* **113**(2):319-29.



**Nanda, V.** and DeGrado, W. (2006) Computational Design of Heterochiral Peptides against a Helical Target. *Journal of the American Chemical Society.* **128**(3):809-816

### In Press:

Foronjy, R.F., **Mirochnitchenko, O.**, Propokenko O., Lemaitre V., Jia, Y., **Inouye, M.**, Okada, Y., D'Armiento, J.M. (2005) Superoxide Dismutase Expression Attenuates Cigarette Smoke or Elastase Generated Emphysema in Mice. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med.*

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### 2. How will the take over by the U. S. government affect our university, our medical school operation and our research activity?

- Does this take over affect only the New Jersey Medical School Hospital or the entire UMDNJ system?
- Will this action affect our ability to receive federal research funding?
- How will this affect our daily research activity, including the purchasing of equipment and research supplies?

### 3. "Mr. Christie continues to investigate allegations of widespread cronyism and insider deals that have exposed the institution's political under side. Federal prosecutors are investigating allegations that university officials padded the payroll with patronage employees, curried favor by making contributions to elected officials and politically connected charities, doled out hundreds of millions of dollars when no work appears to have been done, and awarded huge salaries and bonuses to top officials."

- How could these problems have been undetected by the Board of Trustees for so long?
- During the ten years of your tenure, has anyone in our university ever brought any of these problems to your attention?

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- If it is shown that these bonuses were derived from irregular activities, will the university request that the money be returned to the state government?
- What is the actual plan to return the \$4.9M (maybe much more than that)? As a result, will the state budget to our medical school be further reduced?

**4. The credibility of President John J. Petillo and other members of the Central Administration are at risk. The New York Times article (and the recent Star Ledger's article on Dec. 30) raises questions about President Petillo's credibility and his ability to handle these problems. Whether we like it or not, a possibility exists that the new Governor of New Jersey may not reappoint Petillo as President. During the campaign this year, Corzine said that "A UMDNJ president should have a national reputation in medicine or medical research, which Petillo does not have."** (from the Star Ledger's article).

We are certainly concerned about this problem, and would like to know how you feel regarding this concern. Clearly there are problems with President Petillo, as he was a member of the previous Board of Trustees, and "*he has been too slow to change the institution*" (New York Times).

#### **5. Our future**

During the last emergency faculty meeting you organized, Dr. Sarah Hitchcock-De Gregori asked a very appropriate question of the President, stating our concern that it is extremely shameful for the faculty at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School to keep hearing about the serious mismanagement of the Central Administration of UMDNJ. Newspapers and other news media keep stating that UMDNJ is the largest medical school in the nation. I do not think that this "largeness" is anything we should be proud of. It is quite likely that even if the current problems eventually settle down, the infrastructure of UMDNJ will still have its own intrinsic problems for many to take advantage of. With this in mind, should our medical school re-explore the possibility of departing from the UMDNJ organization? Do you support such an activity?