A multidisciplinary research team, led by Dr. Christopher L. Kepley, has recently announced an important discovery that may represent a new way of treating such diseases as asthma, multiple sclerosis and inflammatory arthritis. Their findings focus on fullerenes, or buckyballs, nanoparticles containing just 60 carbon atoms.

"Researchers in many fields are aware of the potential fullerenes have. However, we are the first to show they can turn off the allergic response and basic immune reactions," commented Dr. Kepley, assistant professor in the Department of Internal Medicine.

The research was funded in part by grants from the National Institutes of Health and the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network. "NIH scored these studies on the first attempt in the 8th percentile range, and the program officer suggests that these studies ‘will very likely’ get funded for the RO1, 1.6 million dollars," said Dr. Kepley. These studies will begin to test a pipeline of new nano-based compounds for various inflammatory diseases including arthritis, asthma and diabetes. Dr. Kepley plans on doing a short sabbatical at Harvard Medical School to learn these in vivo models. He has already given invited lectures there in prior years.

Besides Dr. Kepley, Dr. Lawrence Schwartz and Dr. Greg Gomez from the Department of Internal Medicine, the VCU team members working on the project include John J. Ryen, PhD, from the Department of Biology, and Wei Zhao, MD, PhD, from the Department of Pediatrics.

The new study was first published online last month in the *Journal of Immunology* and will appear in print in the July issue of the journal.

“We are proud of faculty like Chris Kepley who are keen observers of biology and have what Pasteur called the prepared mind,” said Richard P. Wenzel, MD, MSc, Chairman of the Department.

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**News Briefs**

Dr. Domenic Sica is one of the three senior editors of *Hypertension Primer*, a 532-page American Heart Association volume that covers all aspects of hypertension, from basic science to clinical applications. Currently in its 4th edition, the book is an immensely valuable source for professionals and educators alike.

The institutional Resident Research Day was held in the Kontos Medical Sciences building on June 7th. The winners of basic science oral presentations were Drs. Lori Sweeney and Sammy Pedram, both from the Department of Internal Medicine. One of the winners of the clinical science presentation was Dr. Amit Varma from our Department.

The Division of Hematology/Oncology and Palliative care received 211 applications for three fellowship spots, interviewed 31 of the most highly qualified candidates, and recently made their final selection. The three new fellows for 2008 are Farn Chan, MD, Paresh Patel, MD, and Andrew Poklepovic, MD.

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– Dr. Christopher L. Kepley
Celebration Time for Graduating Residents and Awards Winners

On May 31st, 2007, the Department of Internal Medicine held its annual Residents Graduation and Recognition Ceremony. This year we recognized all graduates in the Department – preliminary residents, residents and fellows. We also celebrated scholarly achievements of all trainees – interns through senior fellows. Lastly, we awarded multiple teaching awards to faculty and fellows as well as the traditional resident awards.

“Our trainees (interns through senior fellows) have accomplished a tremendous amount this year in their clinical, teaching and research efforts,” said Stephanie Call, MD, MSPH, Director of the Internal Medicine Residency Program. “Those graduating this year are pursuing challenging positions in medicine across the country.”

Excellence in Teaching by a Non-Physician Educator: 
Patricia Fulco, PharmD
Finalist: Kim Varney, PharmD

Most Skilled CPC Diagnostician: 
Venkat Ramachandran, MD

Outstanding Ward Attending: 
Frank Fulco, MD 
Finalist: Lenore Buckley, MD, MPH

Outstanding Attending in a Specialty or ICU Setting: 
Lisa Brath, MD 
Finalist: Marjolein de Wit, MD

Faculty Excellence in Teaching: 
Lisa Brath, MD 
Lenore Buckley, MD, MPH 
Marjolein de Wit, MD 
Jeff Kuchinka, MD 
Leanne Yanni, MD

Orth Muern, MD Award for the Outstanding Fellow: 
Betsy Elenier, MD 
Finalist: Deborah Rowlands Stahlheber, MD

Housestaff Diagnostician Award: 
Darryn Appleton, MBChB 
Ella Popeliansky, MD

Michael W. Riffert, MD Award for the Outanding Intern: 
Debo Udulana, MD, MPH 
Finalist: Hauzael Syed, MD, MPH

Outstanding Second Year Resident Award: 
Darryn Appleton, MBChB 
Finalist: Aaron Fox, MD

Higgins Award for the Outstanding Senior Resident: 
Kristin Miller, MD 
Finalist: Mimi Mahata, MD

New Rheumatology Practice to Open
Beth Rubinstein, MD, is proud to announce the opening of her new practice at the VCU Stony Point Medical Center. She’s looking forward to joining the Department of Medicine faculty.

Dr. Rubinstein is a Richmond native and a graduate of University of Michigan and Virginia Commonwealth University. She completed her residency training at VCU, and is currently finishing up her fellowship in the Division of Rheumatology, Allergy and Immunology.

Dr. Rubinstein specializes in Rheumatology and treatment of osteoporosis. She will start seeing patients in September 2007 in her new office at Stony Point.

Celebration Time for Graduating Residents and Awards Winners (continued from previous page)

Arthur B. Klein, MD Memorial Award: 
Kristin Miller, MD (Awarded to the senior resident who best demonstrates the healing value of carefully listening to patients, and explaining the causes, course and outcome of their disease.)

Scholar’s Prize: 
Antonio Abbate, MD (For demonstration of outstanding teaching skills and a commitment to the education of others.)

Faculty Award for Excellence in the Residency: 
Antonio Abbate, MD (For unswerving intellectual and personal commitment to the art and science of medicine.)

Excellence in Teaching Award: 
Miri Mahata, MD 
Finalist: Antonio Abbate, MD

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Smith JO, Sterling BK. Hepatitis C and HIV. Current Gastroenterology Reports. 2007 Feb; 9(1):85–90.


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The research was funded in part by grants from the National Institutes of Health and the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network. “NIH scored these studies on the first attempt in the 8th percentile range, and the program officer suggests that these studies ’will very likely’ get funded for the RO1, 1.6 million dollars,” said Dr. Kepley. These studies will begin to test a pipeline of new nano-based compounds for various inflammatory diseases including arthritis, asthma and diabetes. Dr. Kepley plans on doing a short sabbatical at Harvard Medical School to learn these in vivo models. He has already given invited lectures there in prior years.

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