

Dear Medical and Dental Students:

Since its inception in 1997, the Clinical Research Training Program (CRTP) has continued to grow and evolve, and we have introduced many exciting modifications. Most exciting is that in 2004 CRTP doubled in size—growing from 15 to 30 fellows, thanks to the support of our NIH Director, Dr. Elias Zerhouni and the NIH Roadmap initiative. The Roadmap is an innovative approach to accelerate fundamental biomedical discovery and translate that knowledge into effective prevention strategies and new treatments. The initiatives funded under the NIH Roadmap address critical roadblocks and knowledge gaps that constrain rapid progress in biomedical research and synergize the work of many NIH Institutes and Centers, representing a unique effort of the NIH as a whole. More promising medical and dental students will now be able to benefit from the opportunity to learn about clinical research here in Bethesda. Importantly, we will retain all of the features that have made CRTP strong, including a class size that will allow us to learn together and to get to know one another very well.

Since becoming the program's director in 2000, I have restructured a format for our seminar and journal club series, which uses a core text in clinical research, along with supplemental information from the contemporary medical literature. Specifically, CRTP fellows lead a discussion of an assigned chapter utilizing slides, handouts, and other teaching aids. Clinical research principles are emphasized. The CRTP fellows also select one or two current journal articles, and they are used in an interactive session to illustrate the research principles in a practical manner.

Another of the new components of CRTP is clinical teaching rounds, which takes advantage of the rich patient population at the NIH. These rounds are typically held every other week. During this teaching exercise, a patient's medical history is presented; the group examines the patient, with emphasis placed on pertinent physical findings; and the principal investigator of the clinical research protocol in which the patient is enrolled talks to the group about the patient's underlying disease as well as the details of the protocol. Using this format, the CRTP fellows get to interact with patients who can also provide their own perspectives on clinical research, based on their involvement in a clinical trial. The clinical teaching rounds are held in the NIH Clinical Center. In late 2004, the new NIH hospital, called the Mark O. Hatfield Clinical Research Center, will open and become home to new inpatient units, day hospitals, and research laboratories.

These new program features have been introduced with the support and encouragement of the fellows themselves. Your year at the NIH, regardless of

which research projects you pursue, will provide you with a deep understanding of the principles and practice of — and people involved in — clinical research. This is an experience not replicated elsewhere. The CRTP fellows, tutors, staff, and I look forward to meeting you during the interviews for this program, and to working with you during your year at the NIH. I have observed the camaraderie that develops among our fellows, the enduring friendships that have grown out of their participation in CRTP, and invite you to consider becoming a part of this very special clinical research experience.

Sincerely,

Frederick P. Ognibene, M.D.
Director, CRTP