

WHO'S WHO at ATS

LAURENCE HUANG: RESEARCH TO 'HELP PEOPLE NOW'

Laurence Huang, M.D., remembers picking up seashells in Atlantic City, walking along the boardwalk and—surely something rare for children vacationing at the Jersey shore—standing at the back of auditoriums, listening to his father address medical conferences.

Chin-Tang Huang, known as C.T., was a pulmonary and critical care medicine specialist at Brooklyn's Kings County Hospital and at Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx. But his late father was hardly the only physician in the family. Dr. Huang's mother, Lena Liu, now retired, worked as a pediatric cardiologist at Manhattan's St. Vincent's Hospital, and his younger siblings also pursued careers in medicine: Andrew is a pediatric urologist and Cheryl is a plastic surgeon.

"My parents never put any pressure on us to become doctors, so it is kind of interesting how we all chose medicine as a career," said Dr. Huang, chief of San Francisco General Hospital's HIV/AIDS Chest Clinic and professor of medicine and assistant director of the Clinical and Translational Science Institute Comprehensive Mentoring Program at University of California, San Francisco. "Our parents were very powerful role models for us. They were both highly regarded clinicians by their patients and peers. They really loved their jobs and had a passion for their profession. One reason I ended up in this specialty probably was because of my dad."

Dr. Huang enjoys the intellectual stimulation and the diversity of his work. He speaks of the "progression" of his research, beginning with an interest in HIV/AIDS when the first cases were described in the early 1980s. At first, his research focused on Pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP)—the "most common and most devastating AIDS-defining opportunistic pneumonia in the U.S.," Dr. Huang said. As PCP became less frequent in this country, Dr. Huang's research expanded to include PCP, tuberculosis and other HIV-associated opportunistic pneumonias among HIV/AIDS patients in sub-Saharan Africa. He is currently researching the lung microbiome in HIV/AIDS patients in both the United States and Uganda.

"My clinical and research interests are in the pneumonias that people with HIV get," said Dr. Huang. "In the old days, the most important pneumonia to study was PCP. As it became less common in the United States, I expanded my focus to include opportunistic pneumonias throughout the world. And, if you're going to study pneumonia in sub-Saharan Africa, the place to start is to study tuberculosis."

In late 2009, Dr. Huang spent 10 days in Uganda, where he collaborated with Ugandan and American specialists on a study of bacteria, fungi and viruses that attack the lungs of people with HIV/AIDS. What most excites him about this and his previous research, he said, is its focus on real people with health problems.



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"I get a lot of satisfaction studying clinical problems that affect people now, and asking questions, the answers to which can help people now," he said. "The observations we have made can immediately affect the way people at [my hospital] are cared for today."

Dr. Huang's job allows him "to multi-task and to wear different hats," he said. "I really enjoy taking care of patients, doing research, teaching and mentoring junior researchers. I would not enjoy my job as much if I could only do one of those things. The greatest blessing about medicine is that there's an incredible amount of flexibility and a wide spectrum of what you can do as a doctor."

For the past 16 years, Dr. Huang has been active in the ATS's Assembly on Microbiology, Tuberculosis and Pulmonary Infections. He serves as chair-elect of the assembly and has chaired its planning and nominating committees.

"I feel very passionate about the ATS. It's the main scientific organization I'm involved with," Dr. Huang said. "Our assembly has an outstanding track record in producing statements and guidelines that are helpful to practicing clinicians. These are documents the entire country uses on a daily basis; there's a doctor somewhere looking up our information on treating pneumonia."

A self-described "huge sports fan," Dr. Huang has passed on a life-long passion for the New York Mets and New York Rangers to sons Colin, Peter and Simon. He and wife, Susan Chang, a lawyer, enjoy taking their boys to games and watching them play Little League baseball and soccer and run in cross-country meets. "Sports is something that our entire family can participate in together." ■

IMPROVED SYSTEM FOR COI DISCLOSURE & REVIEW

Ethics and Conflict of Interest Chair Douglas White, M.D., M.A.S., announced that significant changes have been made to the process through which the Society manages conflict of interest (COI).

On January 15, the Society will start transitioning from the interim PDF disclosure form that it has used since the "Policy on Management of Conflict of Interest in Official ATS Documents, Projects and Conferences" was enacted in March 2008 to an HTML-based system called COI SMART.

"Although the PDF form could be submitted online, many users found it to be cumbersome and the Society's information system limitations required duplicate disclosure by International Conference presenters," explained Dr. White. "The interim system also required reviewers of non-conference disclosures to go to a separate review site, which offered limited guidance on identifying and managing potential conflicts."

Developed by Health Care Compliance Strategies, Inc., the COI SMART software will streamline the disclosure submission and review process.

Disclosures will be securely archived online, which means that users can review, update and attest to the accuracy and currency of what they have submitted when required.

ATS 2010 planners and presenters who need to submit or review disclosures will receive an e-mail this month with instructions on how to do so through the new system. Participants in other areas of ATS operations, including journal authors, will switch to the new system later this year. The Society has already made the questions asked by COI SMART compatible with the model disclosure form issued by the International Council of Medical Journal Editors in November 2009.

For more information, please visit www.thoracic.org/sections/about-ats/coi-management/index.html.