COMMENTARY

AGA Institute Council 2018 Section Research Mentor Award Recipients

Each year, Digestive Disease Week® (DDW) brings together the best clinical, translational, and basic science in the field. It is also an opportunity for many trainees and young investigators to present their work, receive advice from senior investigators, and build their professional networks. At DDW 2018, the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) recognized 1 member each from 13 Council sections who have committed themselves to training these young investigators and have a demonstrated track record of outstanding research mentorship. Cellular Molecular Gastroenterology and Hepatology extends our appreciation to the awardees in each section for providing guidance and mentorship to the next generation of researchers.

Basic and Clinical Intestinal Disorders Section: Gary D. Wu, MD

Gary Wu is the Ferdinand G. Weisbrod Professor in Gastroenterology at the University of Pennsylvania’s Perelman School of Medicine where he is the GI Associate Chief for Research, the Associate Director of the Center for Molecular Studies in Digestive and Liver Disease, the Co-Director of the PennCHOP Microbiome Program, and the Director of the Penn Center for Nutritional Sciences and Medicine. With respect to the latter, he is an advisor to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Academy of Sciences, and the US Department of Agriculture on topics related to human health, diet, and nutrition. An elected member of both the American Society for Clinical Investigation and the Association of American Physicians, Dr Wu was the inaugural Director and Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board for the AGA’s Center for Gut Microbiome Research and Education and currently serves as the Basic Research Councillor of AGA’s Governing Board. Research programs in the Wu laboratory focus on the mutualistic interactions between the gut microbiota and its host, with a particular emphasis on metabolism including nitrogen balance, intestinal oxygen regulation, and epithelial intermediary metabolism. As a physician-scientist, he has gained international recognition for his highly innovative multidisciplinary team research approach to translational avenues of investigation that help to guide the development of therapeutic strategies relevant to inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) and metabolic diseases. Dr Wu has been a mentor to dozens of graduate students, postdoctoral students, and medical students, and has specifically mentored 11 gastroenterology fellows, nearly all of whom remain actively involved in research at academic medical centers and in industry.

Cellular and Molecular Gastroenterology Section: Charalabos Pothoulakis, MD

Charalabos (Harry) Pothoulakis is a Professor of Medicine, Pathology, and Laboratory Medicine, and the Eli and Edythe Broad Chair in Medicine in the Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Division of Digestive Diseases at the University of California Los Angeles. He graduated from the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki Medical School in Greece and joined the Division of Gastroenterology at Boston University Medical Center as a Research Fellow in 1982. After completion of his fellowship, he became a faculty member in the Department of Medicine at Boston University School of Medicine. Dr Pothoulakis then joined...
the Division of Gastroenterology at Beth Israel Medical Center, Harvard Medical School, in 1996 and became a Professor of Medicine in 2005. In 2007, he joined the University of California Los Angeles as Director of the Inflammatory Bowel Disease Research Center and is now the Director of Research for the Division of Digestive Diseases. For the past 3 decades, his laboratory has been focused primarily on identifying the in vivo and in vitro signaling mechanisms of neuropeptides and hormones in several disease states, including IBD, *Clostridium difficile* infection, and irritable bowel syndrome. More recently, his research group has shown that microRNA–neuropeptide interactions play an important role in the development of inflammatory signaling in IBD and colon cancer. Dr Pothoulakis has published more than 250 research articles, reviews, and book chapters, and his research has been supported by grants from the NIH, the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation, The Broad Foundation, and The Martin Blinder Foundation for Crohn’s Disease. He has trained more than 60 basic and physician-scientists and served as the primary mentor for more than 20 funded postdoctoral or Career Development Awards.

Clinical Practice Section: Amnon Sonnenberg, MD, MSc

Amnon Sonnenberg obtained a MD and MSc (in physics) from the University of Bonn in Germany. After a gastroenterology fellowship at Triemli Hospital and the University of Zurich in Switzerland, he became a Lecturer (Privatdozent) in Internal Medicine at the University of Düsseldorf in Germany. In 1985, he came to the United States, with consecutive faculty appointments at Harvard Medical School, the Medical College of Wisconsin, the University of New Mexico, and Oregon Health and Science University, where he currently works as a Professor of Medicine and clinical gastroenterologist at the Portland VA Medical Center. During his 40-year career, he has mentored 30 clinical fellows and junior faculty, pursuing research in gastrointestinal epidemiology and medical decision analysis. These joint research endeavors have resulted in 550 scholarly articles. His publications have dealt with the demographic, geographic, and temporal distributions of chronic digestive diseases, such as peptic ulcer, gastric cancer, reflux disease, colon cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, and how underlying variations of *Helicobacter pylori* infection have shaped their epidemiologic behavior. His current research is focused on the role of the gastric acid barrier in the occurrence of colon cancer and inflammatory bowel disease. His other research interests in decision analysis relate to mathematical modeling of physician behavior and the influence of cognitive function on medical decision making in gastroenterology.

Esophageal, Gastric, and Duodenal Disorders Section: Nicholas J. Shaheen, MD, MPH, AGAF

Nicholas J. Shaheen is the Bozymski-Heizer Distinguished Professor of Medicine at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, and Chief of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at the University of North Carolina. He is an Adjunct Professor of Epidemiology at the University of North Carolina Gillings Global School of Public Health. His research and clinical interests center on gastroesophageal reflux disease, and precancerous and cancerous conditions of the esophagus. He has a clinical and research interest in the early detection and treatment of cancerous and precancerous lesions of the esophagus. He has authored more than 300 publications in these areas. Dr Shaheen is the author of multiple national guidelines in Barrett’s esophagus, gastroesophageal reflux disease, and eosinophilic esophagitis. He has served as senior associate editor for the *American Journal of Gastroenterology*, and on multiple editorial boards. Dr Shaheen receives research funding from the NIH, multiple societies, and private and public foundations.

Gastrointestinal Oncology Section: Randall W. Burt, MD, AGAF

Randall W. Burt is an Emeritus Professor of Medicine at the University of Utah and an Emeritus Director of Prevention and Outreach at the Huntsman Cancer Institute. He also has served as the Director of Huntsman Cancer Institute’s High Risk Colon Cancer Program, co-leader of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, Interim Executive Director of Huntsman Cancer Institute, and GI Division Chief at the University of Utah School. He is a leader in policy making for average- and high-risk colon cancer screening nationally and internationally.

Dr Burt is a clinical genetics investigator (gastroenterologist) whose career has involved research in the inheritance of colorectal cancer and the identification of colon cancer susceptibility genes. He was one of the first investigators to describe common inheritance of colon adenomatous polyposis segregating with colorectal cancer. He was involved with identifying the *APC* gene, describing the attenuated polyposis syndrome, developing strategies for genetic testing and surveillance for inherited and familial high-risk colon cancer, and performing clinical trials for chemoprevention in sporadic and inherited colon cancer. He
also has studied genetic–environmental interactions and gene–gene interactions of colon cancer. His clinical focus is screening for colorectal and other cancers, with particular attention given to increased risk factors in inherited and noninherited polyposis syndromes. Dr Burt has been a principal investigator on several large NIH studies of colon cancer, and has authored or co-authored numerous textbook chapters and articles in major scientific journals, several of which are considered seminal. These activities has involved trainee and faculty mentoring.

**Growth, Development, and Child Health Section: Deborah L. Gumucio, PhD**

Deborah L. Gumucio is the James Douglas Engel Professor of Cell and Developmental Biology at the University of Michigan. Dr Gumucio completed her undergraduate, Master’s degree, PhD (with Dr Miriam Meisler), and postdoctoral (with Dr Francis Collins) studies at Michigan before joining the Michigan faculty in 1991 as an Assistant Professor in Anatomy and Cell Biology. Continuously funded since that time, her laboratory has contributed substantially to our understanding of the molecular and cellular mechanisms of intestinal development, villus morphogenesis, and intestinal elongation. Her laboratory developed tools for the analysis of intestinal development and homeostasis that have enabled hundreds of investigators across the world to modify gene expression in the intestinal epithelium (the Villin promoter, now at AddGene and the Villin-Cre mice, at Jackson Laboratories). Dr Gumucio has trained 26 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, many of whom have gone on to contribute to the scientific community. In 1995, Dr Gumucio founded the Center for Organogenesis at Michigan (and served as its Director until 2010); this cross-disciplinary center continues to promote interactions among applied, clinical, and basic scientists focused on organ development and disease. In addition, she directed the Organogenesis Training Program (T32 funded) and pioneered the BioArtography Project, a blend of art and science that serves as a public outreach program and fundraiser for trainees at Michigan (www.bioartography.com).

**Imaging, Endoscopy, and Advanced Technology Section: Michael B. Wallace, MD, MPH, AGAF**

Michael Wallace is a Professor of Medicine and the Director of Digestive Disease Research at Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida. He also is the current Editor in Chief of *Gastrointestinal Endoscopy* and a former associate editor of *Gastroenterology*.

He received his medical degree from Duke University School of Medicine in 1992. He completed a residency program in Internal Medicine in 1995 and a fellowship in Gastroenterology and Hepatology in 1998 at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. During that time, he also completed a Master’s in Public Health with a focus on clinical research at the Harvard School of Public Health.

Dr Wallace completed an advanced endoscopy fellowship in endoscopic ultrasound and therapeutic endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography in 1999 at the Medical University of South Carolina.

He remained on the faculty at the Medical University of South Carolina until 2003, when he joined the Mayo Clinic as Associate Professor and Director of Gastroenterology Research. He was promoted to Professor in 2007, and to Chair of the Division in 2010. Dr Wallace served multiple roles for AGA, including Associate Editor for *Gastroenterology* from 2006 to 2009.

Dr Wallace’s research focuses on advanced endoscopic imaging and therapies for gastrointestinal neoplasia including light scattering spectroscopy, autofluorescence imaging, narrow-band imaging, confocal endomicroscopy, and molecular imaging. He also has published extensively in esophageal, pancreatic, and colorectal neoplasia detection and therapy.

Dr Wallace has published more than 300 peer-reviewed manuscripts and more than 300 abstracts, book chapters, review articles, and editorials. He has mentored more than 30 gastroenterology and research fellows from around the world, many of whom have gone on to distinguished careers themselves.

**Immunology, Microbiology, and Inflammatory Bowel Diseases Section: Claudio Fiocchi, MD**

Claudio Fiocchi obtained his medical degree in 1969 from the Santa Casa Faculty of Medicine in São Paulo, Brazil. From 1970 to 1980 he trained in internal medicine, immunology, and gastroenterology in São Paulo, Brazil; Baltimore, MD; and Cleveland, OH. Since 1980 he has held faculty positions and professorships at the Cleveland Clinic and Case Western Reserve University.

Dr Fiocchi has been a Professor of Molecular Medicine at the Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine in Cleveland since 2005. Since 1993 he also has been a Professor of Medicine at the School of Medicine of Case Western Reserve University, as well as a Professor of...
Pathology and a Professor of Pediatrics at the same university since 1994 and 1997, respectively. His lifelong research interest is the pathogenesis of inflammatory bowel disease, in which he has made numerous contributions in the areas of immunoregulation, cytokines, immune–nonimmune cell interactions, angiogenesis, fibrosis, and pediatric IBD. His most recent area of interest is the use of systems biology to understand IBD pathogenesis in a more comprehensive fashion. During his career, Dr Fiocchi was privileged in training several young investigators from the United States, Europe, Asia, and South America, many of whom went on to become leaders in IBD in their own countries.

In addition, he has served as an Associate Editor or Editorial Board member of several journals including Gastroenterology, Inflammatory Bowel Diseases, Digestive and Liver Disease, Current Opinion in Gastroenterology, and the American Journal of Physiology Gastrointestinal and Liver Physiology.

Liver and Biliary Section: Scott L. Friedman, MD

Scott L. Friedman is the Dean for Therapeutic Discovery and Chief of the Division of Liver Diseases at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. He has performed pioneering research into the underlying causes of scarring, or fibrosis associated with chronic liver disease, affecting millions worldwide. Dr Friedman was among the first to isolate and characterize the hepatic stellate cell, the key cell type responsible for scar production in the liver. His work has spawned an entire field that now is realizing its translational and therapeutic potential, with new antifibrotic therapies for liver disease reaching clinical trials. Dr Friedman’s work has been continuously funded by the NIH since 1985.

A 1979 graduate of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, he was a Medical Resident at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston, followed by a Gastroenterology Fellowship at the University of California San Francisco before assuming a faculty position there, which he held for 10 years. He is widely recognized as a dynamic effective speaker, and is also a respected author, with more than 350 peer-reviewed publications. Dr Friedman was a recipient in 1993 of the Saul Horowitz, Jr, Outstanding Alumnus Award from Mount Sinai. In 2003, Dr Friedman was honored with the International Hans Popper Award for his outstanding contributions to the understanding of liver disease and its treatment. He has mentored more than 80 postdoctoral fellows and students, most of whom remain in academic training programs or faculty.

Microbiome and Microbial Diseases in the Gastrointestinal Tract Section: Jeffrey I. Gordon, MD

Jeffrey Gordon is the Dr Robert J. Glaser Distinguished University Professor at Washington University in St. Louis. He received his AB from Oberlin College and his MD from the University of Chicago. After completing his clinical training in internal medicine and gastroenterology, and a postdoctoral fellowship at the NIH, he joined the faculty at Washington University where he has spent his entire career; first as a member of the Departments of Medicine and Biological Chemistry, then as Head of the Department of Molecular Biology and Pharmacology, and for the past decade as founding Director of the University’s Interdepartmental Center for Genome Sciences and Systems Biology.

Members of his laboratory have developed gnotobiotic animal models, and new experimental and computational approaches to characterize the assembly, dynamic operations, functional properties, and biological effects of human gut microbial communities. He has combined these models with human studies involving twins as well as members of birth cohorts living in low-, middle-, and high-income countries representing diverse geographic locations and cultural traditions. His group is focused on addressing the global health challenges of obesity and childhood undernutrition through new understanding of the interactions between diets and the gut microbiome and new ways of promoting healthy development of the gut community during the past several years of postnatal life.

He regards his greatest honor as having had the privilege and pleasure of serving as the research mentor to more than 130 PhD and MD/PhD students and postdoctoral fellows, a number of whom have become leaders in the microbiome field.

Neurogastroenterology and Motility Section: Richard W. Mccallum, MD, AGAF

Richard McCallum, a native of Brisbane, Australia, attended the University of Queensland and the Queensland Medical School. His academic appointments include Director of GI Endoscopy and Motility at Yale University, The Paul Janssen Professor of Medicine, and Chief of Gastroenterology at the University of
Lee Kaplan is the Director of the Obesity, Metabolism, and Nutrition Institute, Founding Director of the Massachusetts General Hospital Weight Center, and Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. Kaplan's clinical expertise is in the areas of obesity medicine, gastroenterology, and liver disease, focusing on the causes and complications of obesity and the development of new and more effective strategies for preventing and treating obesity and related disorders.

Dr. Kaplan is the associate director of the NIH-sponsored Nutrition and Obesity Research Center at Harvard and is the Director of the Blackburn Course in Obesity Medicine and the Obesity Medicine and Nutrition Fellowship Program at Harvard and Massachusetts General Hospital. He serves or has served on the Advisory Council of the National Institute of Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Diseases, the NIH Clinical Obesity Research Panel, the Scientific Advisory Board of the AGA Microbiome Institute, and scientific advisory committees for several foundations and corporations. He is a past chair of the AGA Obesity, Metabolism, and Nutrition section and a past chair of the Bariatric Surgery section of The Obesity Society.

Dr. Kaplan graduated from Harvard University and received his medical degree and PhD in molecular biology from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York. He completed an internship and residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in gastroenterology at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, as well as a fellowship in genetics at Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Pancreatic Disorders
Section: Suresh T. Chari, MD

Suresh Chari trained in Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology in India. He then received the Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship in Mannheim, Germany. He moved to the United States in 1993 where he completed a residency at the University of Arizona and a fellowship in Gastroenterology at Mayo Clinic before joining as faculty at Mayo Clinic Rochester in 1999. He is currently a Professor of Medicine and a consultant in the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at Mayo Clinic College of Medicine in Rochester, Minnesota. He has been the Director of Pancreas Clinic at Mayo Clinic Rochester. He has been Councilor and past President of the American Pancreatic Association, as well as Councilor and current President of the International Association of Pancreatology. His NIH-funded research has been on new-onset diabetes as an early marker of pancreatic cancer. He was a principal investigator of the EXPAND trial, a prospective pilot screening study for sporadic pancreatic cancer in subjects with new-onset diabetes. He is also the principal investigator at Mayo Clinic for the U01 Consortium for the Study of Chronic Pancreatitis, Diabetes and Pancreatic Cancer, in which he is co-leading a prospective study on new-onset diabetes. His clinical research has spanned the breadth of pancreatic diseases including tropical chronic pancreatitis, autoimmune pancreatitis, pancreatic cancer, and cystic tumors of the pancreas. He received the Mentor of the Year Award for 2017 from the Mayo Foundation. Among his mentees are prominent Pancreatologists in the United States and worldwide.