

## Smaller presence at SOT, but big enthusiasm for science

By Robin Mackar

Although the NIEHS and NTP presence at this year's Society of Toxicology (SOT) annual meeting March 10-14 was much smaller than usual due to budget concerns, enthusiasm for science was still in abundance.

San Antonio was the place to be for those who wanted to hear the latest toxicology findings, learn about funding and training opportunities, and personally meet some of the NIEHS and NTP staff attending and participating in the meeting.

Before the official meeting even kicked off, staff members were busy serving on committees planning for next year's conference, setting up posters and exhibits, and teaching continuing education courses.

### Funding issues

At the Meet the Director symposium on March 11, Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., director of both the NIEHS and NTP, updated SOT attendees on the current federal budget scenario, which she acknowledges is something that has been changing on an almost daily basis.

Birnbaum talked about steps being taken at NIH to prepare for the sequestration. "As of March 1, the federal government is operating under a sequestration, which means a 5 percent cut for NIH," Birnbaum said. She discussed how the payline for grants at NIEHS would likely have to drop, resulting in fewer new grants being funded. Birnbaum encouraged attendees to continue their conversations with NIEHS program staff to keep abreast of available funding announcements and opportunities.

Birnbaum also used her time to update attendees on happenings at the Institute, including progress toward developing cross-cutting implementation plans to help NIEHS reach its overall strategic goals.

### Resource room

One of the most popular spots for new investigators, as well as long-standing grantees, was the centrally located NIH resource room.

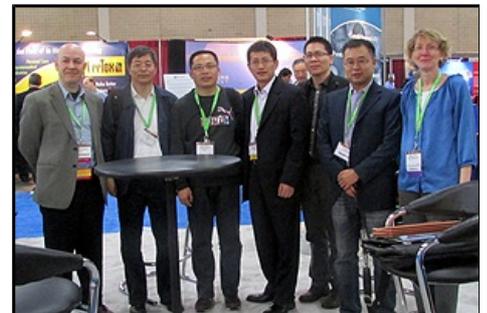
"The funding room was always busy," said Annette Kirshner, Ph.D., program administrator in the NIEHS Cellular, Organ, and Systems Pathobiology Branch of the Division of Extramural Research and Training (DERT). Kirshner and others in DERT, including Janice Allen, Ph.D., from the Scientific Review Branch, worked with SOT to host the room and a brown bag luncheon, so new investigators could become familiar with the NIH peer review grant process. DERT staffed the room for two days, providing one-on-one consultation time with researchers who had questions about NIH funding and training opportunities.

Another popular session was the symposium chaired by Paul Foster, Ph.D., of NTP, and Earl Gray, Ph.D., of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It was standing room only for the "Nonmonotonic Dose-Response Curves and Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals: Fact or Falderal?" session, which also featured Birnbaum.

(Robin Mackar is the news director in the NIEHS Office of Communications and Public Liaison, and a frequent contributor to the Environmental Factor.)



*Birnbaum, left, always made time to talk science with SOT attendees. (Photo courtesy of Robin Mackar)*



*Nigel Walker, Ph.D., NTP deputy division director for science, left, and Mary Wolfe, Ph.D., NTP deputy division director for policy, right, set time aside to talk to a delegation from China about NTP key activities and how NTP is organized. (Photo courtesy of Denise Lasko)*



*Ray Tice, Ph.D., chief of the NTP Biomolecular Screening Branch, right, converses with Outstanding New Environment Scientist awardee Vishal Vaidya, Ph.D., of Harvard, about NTP efforts, through Tox21, to link chemicals, genes, pathways, and disease. (Photo courtesy of Robin Mackar)*



Many postdocs stopped by the popular, consolidated NIEHS, NTP, and Environmental Health Perspectives (EHP) exhibit to talk with staff about available positions in NTP. (Photo courtesy of Robin Mackar)



There were always stimulating conversations going on in the well-attended resource room. Above, NIEHS Program Administrator Carol Shreffler, Ph.D., right, meets with Ezdihar Hassoun, Ph.D., of the University of Toledo. (Photo courtesy of Robin Mackar)



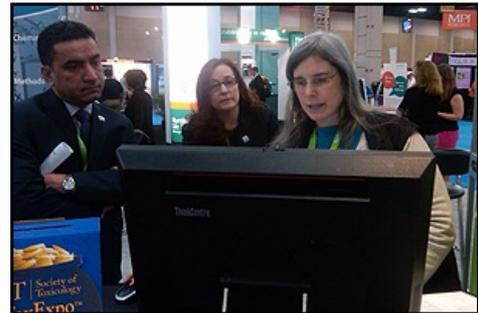
Tammy Collins, Ph.D., right, who heads the NIEHS Office of Fellows' Career Development, shared her experience of being a postdoc with others who stopped by the exhibit. Collins walked prospective applicants through the process of applying for laboratory positions at NIEHS. (Photo courtesy of Robin Mackar)



NTP Toxicology Branch Chief Paul Foster, Ph.D., was all smiles, after his talks on low-dose were completed. (Photo courtesy of Robin Mackar)



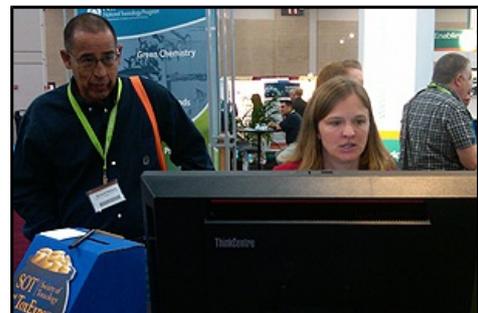
Scott Auerbach, Ph.D., right, of the NTP Biomolecular Screening Branch, gave hands-on demonstrations of the DrugMatrix® database and ToxFX® reporting system, at the exhibit space. (Photo courtesy of Robin Mackar)



NTP biologist Laura Hall, right, spent many hours proudly showcasing the capabilities of the Chemical Effects in Biological Systems database, based at NIEHS. (Photo courtesy of Robin Mackar)



EHP contract staff Mary Collins, Ph.D., right, talked a potential author through some editorial suggestions. (Photo courtesy of Denise Lasko)



Abee Boyles, Ph.D., center, demonstrated some of the Web-based tools that the NTP Office of Health Assessment and Translation (OHAT) has brought forward for systematic review. Boyles and Andrew Rooney, Ph.D, also of OHAT, presented the tools and concepts of systematic review, at a well-attended exhibitor-hosted session on March 12. (Photo courtesy of Robin Mackar)

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