AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR MICROBIOLOGY | Journal of Clinical Microbiology®

EDITORIAL

2021 American Society for Microbiology Awards Program: Clinical Microbiology Honorees

Erik Munson,[a] Editor, *Journal of Clinical Microbiology*

[a]College of Health Sciences, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

While cognizant of the routine, necessary, and often challenging (1) laboratory activities related to the SARS-CoV-2 infection pandemic, we at the *Journal of Clinical Microbiology* are pleased to recognize three clinical microbiologists who have been bestowed with honors that validate a high level of achievement in and/or significant contributions to the field. The American Academy of Microbiology (AAM) is responsible for stewardship of the 16 American Society for Microbiology (ASM) awards. A complete listing of past recipients of ASM awards can be found at the following link: https://asm.org/ASM/media/Fellowships/Past-ASM-Awardees-for-Current-ASM-Awards-6-1-20_1.pdf.

The ASM Award for Service recognizes outstanding contributions through service to the microbiological community. Honorees provide such service on a strictly volunteer basis, without having held office as an ASM officer, chairperson of the Clinical Practice Committee Board, or chairperson of the American Academy of Microbiology. The ASM Scherago-Rubin Award for Clinical Microbiology, first awarded in 1987, recognizes an outstanding bench-level clinical microbiologist involved in routine diagnostic work who has distinguished him- or herself by excellent performance. The award was established by Dr. Sally Jo Rubin in honor of her grandfather, Professor Morris Scherago. The ASM Award for Research and Leadership in Clinical Microbiology recognizes an outstanding scientist/clinical microbiologist with distinguished research achievements and a record of innovation and advancement of the clinical microbiology profession. This honor represents the 2019 merger of the BD Award for Research in Clinical Microbiology and the bioMérieux Sonnenwirth Award for Leadership in Clinical Microbiology, which were originally established in 1978 and 1986, respectively.

The recipient of the 2021 ASM Award for Service is Barbara Robinson-Dunn, Ph.D., D(ABMM), FIDSA, F(AAM). Dr. Robinson-Dunn is currently a professor in the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine in Royal Oak, MI. She has served as technical director of the clinical microbiology laboratory at Beaumont Health System since 2001. After receiving a baccalaureate degree from the University of Colorado, Dr. Robinson-Dunn began her career as a hospital laboratory microbiologist in Colorado and Nebraska prior to pursuing a master's (University of Nebraska Medical Center) and a doctoral (University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center) degree. She completed an ASM Committee on Postgraduate Educational Programs (CPEP)-approved fellowship program in medical and public health microbiology at the North Carolina Memorial Hospital in Chapel Hill, NC.

Eligibility criteria for the ASM Award for Service include demonstration of a commitment to furthering the goals of ASM and the ability to inspire commitment from others that has collectively yielded significant contributions to the membership of ASM. The awardee's breadth of volunteer service must have been at the national level for multiple years. The ASM Award for Service is not restricted to an individual within the clinical microbiology discipline. Dr. Robinson-Dunn's primary nominator for the award,

Citation Munson E. 2021. 2021 American Society for Microbiology Awards Program: clinical microbiology honorees. J Clin Microbiol 59:e00001-21. https://doi.org/10.1128/JCM.00001-21.

Editor Alexander J. McAdam, Boston Children's Hospital

Address correspondence to erik.munson@marquette.edu.

Accepted manuscript posted online 20 January 2021

Published 20 April 2021

Dr. Amanda Harrington from Loyola University Medical Center, wrote, "what inspired me to write this letter of nomination is . . . commitment to service. After meeting Dr. Robinson-Dunn early in my career, it was readily apparent how active and involved she is in our microbiology communities and organizations. It requires support and engagement from members like her for our societies to grow and flourish."

Evidence of Dr. Robinson-Dunn's service is plentiful and impossible to completely itemize in this article. Some examples at the national level include several roles for the American Board of Medical Microbiology within the American Academy of Microbiology from 1987 to 1995, a 2003–2007 appointment to the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Advisory Committee sponsored by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, membership in the ASM Laboratory Practice Committee from 2007 to 2016, several roles (including councilor, incoming chair, and chair) within ASM Division C (clinical microbiology) and Divisional Group 1 between 2004 and 2016, and programming, steering, planning, and Clinical and Public Health Microbiology Track Leader activities from 2011 to 2017 relative to ASM General Meetings and the transition to ASM Microbe. Dr. Harrington commented that the Divisional Group 1 representative role is one "requiring leadership and skill to shape member experience with ASM and to provide feedback from membership back to the organization." Dr. Robinson-Dunn previously served as a laboratory director for the State of Michigan Department of Community Health from 1984 to 2001. In this capacity, her service commitment included activities such as serving on the Michigan Advisory Committee for the Elimination of Tuberculosis, holding a number of elected offices within the Michigan Infectious Disease Society, and serving as executive councilor for the Michigan Antibiotic Resistance Reduction Coalition.

Dr. Robinson-Dunn's record of service is complemented by quality scholarship. Her publication and presentation record has focused on tuberculosis, fungal diseases, public health microbiology, emerging infectious diseases, and detection of antimicrobial resistance. She has participated in publication of intersociety guidance documents (2, 3), coauthored several chapters of the *Clinical Microbiology Procedures Handbook* (4–6), and contributed to initial characterization of *Staphylococcus aureus* isolates in the United States with decreased susceptibility to vancomycin (8). Dr. Robinson-Dunn has been awarded fellowships by both the Infectious Diseases Society of America and the American Academy of Microbiology and was bestowed with the Research, Epidemiology and Laboratory Public Health Practice Program Award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2003. Dr. Harrington summarized Dr. Robinson-Dunn's contribution to the field of clinical microbiology by stating, "Our clinical microbiology field, organizations, and communities have gained so much from the engagement, enthusiasm, scientific expertise and hard work of Dr. Robinson-Dunn. She has balanced a highly productive career with her generosity and kind spirit. I think she is one of the 'unsung heroes' of clinical microbiology, a true leader in our field."

The recipient of the 2021 ASM Scherago-Rubin Award for Clinical Microbiology is Brandon C. Ellis, M.L.S.(ASCP)^{CM}. Mr. Ellis has served as laboratory manager in the Medical Microbiology Division (staff of 93 employees across three shifts in all disciplines of medical microbiology) at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, MD, since 2018. Mr. Ellis has been affiliated with the laboratory since 2007 in capacities such as evening shift microbiologist, lead clinical laboratory scientist, and medical microbiology supervisor. He received his baccalaureate degree in medical technology from the University of Delaware in Newark, DE, and has furthered his education through graduate coursework in medical mycology (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, MD) and business administration (Loyola University, Baltimore, MD).

Eligibility criteria for the ASM Scherago-Rubin Award for Clinical Microbiology stipulate a non-doctoral-level clinical microbiologist involved primarily in routine diagnostic work, rather than in research, who has distinguished himself or herself with excellent performance in the clinical laboratory. Mr. Ellis's nominator for the award, Dr. Karen C.

Carroll (also affiliated with the Medical Microbiology Division of The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine), characterizes him as being a strong multitasker and independent worker who is capable of decisive problem-solving and has been from the outset of his tenure in the laboratory. "Brandon approached his work with the attitude of 'how can we improve testing for optimum patient care?' He learned procedures quickly and volunteered frequently to participate in assay validation and clinical research projects to implement novel diagnostic platforms to accomplish his goal of improving patient care. Brandon particularly distinguished himself in the massive transition from biochemical testing to MALDI-TOF MS. He not only mastered the hands-on component of testing but also organized employee training and competency."

Dr. Carroll also cited Mr. Ellis's active participation in the overall reorganization and expansion of anaerobic bacteriology services in the laboratory, with such efforts recognized at the clinical practitioner level in terms of targeted antimicrobial therapy. Furthermore, he played an integral role in the creation of a federally designated biocontainment unit in response to the prospect of Ebola virus disease or other highly communicable infectious agents.

Mr. Ellis's dedication to the field of clinical microbiology extends beyond the diagnostic laboratory. His supplied *curriculum vitae* lists 22 abstracts and 10 peer-reviewed publications, three of which have been published in the *Journal of Clinical Microbiology* (9–11). In addition, he participated in an evaluation of multiple molecular assays for laboratory diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 infection (12). Mr. Ellis was the recipient of the Joan Valentine Award for Research in 2009, has presented symposium topics ranging from anaerobic bacteriology to "Microbiology Supervillains" to "Typhoid Mary" for The Johns Hopkins Hospital Department of Pathology, has discussed matrix-assisted laser desorption ionization–time of flight mass spectrometry (MALDI-TOF MS) interfacing and workflow at the national level, and has presented at the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science Clinical Laboratory Educators Conference.

In her nomination letter, Dr. Carroll further speaks of Mr. Ellis's leadership capacity. "Brandon's engagement extends beyond our laboratory. Always the champion of his colleagues, he cochairs the Pathology Staff Diversity Committee, and he started the Microbiology Staff Morale Committee soliciting feedback for lab week activities, new employee welcome luncheons, *et cetera*. His leadership qualities at the bench in service to patients facilitated his promotion to administrative positions, which has only made him more effective as a clinical microbiologist." Despite his newly assumed management position, "he maintains his competency and his connections with the staff. His strength as a leader has shone like a beacon during this SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Brandon worked to ensure the supply chain with our existing vendors and worked with hospital administrators to acquire new instruments. Others outside the Department frequently sought his advice and assistance with issues not under the laboratory's purview."

The recipient of the 2021 ASM Award for Research and Leadership in Clinical Microbiology is Melissa B. Miller, Ph.D., D(ABMM), F(AAM). Dr. Miller is currently a professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine in Chapel Hill, NC. She also serves as director of the Clinical Microbiology, Molecular Microbiology, Mycobacteriology, Mycology, and Parasitology Laboratories of McLendon Clinical Laboratories at UNC Hospitals in Chapel Hill. Another former medical technologist, Dr. Miller received her baccalaureate degree in medical technology from Jacksonville University in Jacksonville, FL, and was employed by hospital laboratories in Alabama and New Jersey prior to commencing graduate studies. Her doctoral research on *Vibrio cholerae* quorum sensing was completed at Princeton University in the laboratory of Dr. Bonnie Bassler. Dr. Miller received CPEP-approved fellowship training at UNC Hospitals under the tutelage of Dr. Peter Gilligan (13).

Eligibility criteria for the ASM Award for Research and Leadership in Clinical Microbiology stipulate that the nominee demonstrates outstanding accomplishment in research and leadership in the clinical microbiology profession, with the nominee

being actively engaged in research and clinical laboratory service. Dr. Miller's nominator, Dr. Esther Babady, director of the Clinical Microbiology Service at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, summarized that "Dr. Miller embodies all the qualities that this award aims to recognize, as her research achievements are outstanding and her tireless efforts in advancing the field of clinical microbiology are without compare."

Dr. Miller has assembled an accomplished research and scholarship résumé early in her career. She has led or shared stewardship of more than two dozen institutional and extramural grants during her tenure. She has been awarded the Young Investigator Award by the Pan American Society for Clinical Virology, the Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics Young Investigator Award by ASM, and the Association of Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC)/*American Journal of Infection Control* (AJIC) Award for Publication Excellence. In addition to authoring greater than 80 peer-reviewed publications, Dr. Miller has coauthored 11 book chapters in works such as the *Tietz Textbook of Laboratory Medicine* (14), *Principles and Practice of Pediatric Infectious Diseases* (15), *The Prokaryotes* (16), and *Diagnostic Molecular Pathology: a Guide to Applied Molecular Testing* (17). She has served as a bacteriology section editor for the 11th and 12th editions of the *Manual of Clinical Microbiology*, has coedited two books (18, 19), and has contributed authorship to guidance/recommendation documents relative to laboratory-developed molecular diagnostic assays and to laboratory diagnosis of *Mycobacterium* spp. and respiratory viruses (20–24). She additionally serves as an editor for the *Journal of Clinical Microbiology*.

Further contributing to this award is a strong cache of leadership activities. Dr. Miller currently holds membership on the Clinical Virology Symposium Planning Committee, the ASM Committee on Microbial Sciences, the ASM Public and Scientific Affairs Committee, and the Infectious Diseases Society of America Diagnostics Committee and is a voting member on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration Microbiology Devices Panel, to name a few. In the past, she has assumed salient roles within the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute, the Association for Molecular Pathology, the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, and the American Society for Clinical Pathology. Dr. Babady additionally wrote, "Dr. Miller is a fierce advocate for clinical microbiologists. Her advocacy has always been evident but was front and center more recently with the 2020 SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. From organizing over 100 clinical microbiologists to sign and support a letter to Congress requesting that high-complexity laboratories be able to develop and offer laboratory-developed tests for SARS-CoV-2 to giving interviews on national television and public radio to highlight the important role played by the clinical microbiologist and the clinical virologist in managing the pandemic, Dr. Miller has always been a leader in our profession."

In recent written correspondence, Stefano Bertuzzi, Ph.D., chief executive officer of ASM, commented on Dr. Miller's pivotal role in the response of ASM to the pandemic. "I was absolutely determined to make sure that ASM was out there making a difference, harnessing the power of our members and stakeholders to help save lives—literally. The chair of our Clinical Microbiology and Public Health Committee, Dr. Melissa Miller, became a spokesperson for the organization, and we focused our experts on interactions with the press. We thought it was important to have credible, trustworthy experts as the face of ASM with the public, in a very complex moment for the society at large. Dr. Miller delivered splendidly."

Please join in congratulating these three microbiologists for their respective achievements.

REFERENCES

1. Loh TP, Horvath AR, Wang CB, Koch D, Adeli K, Mancini N, Ferrari M, Hawkins R, Sethi S, Lippi G, International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine Taskforce on COVID-19. 2020. Operational considerations and challenges of biochemistry laboratories during the COVID-19 outbreak: an IFCC global survey. Clin Chem Lab Med 58:1441–1449. https://doi.org/10.1515/cclm-2020-0710.
2. Miller JM, Binnicker MJ, Campbell S, Carroll KC, Chapin KC, Gilligan PH, Gonzalez MD, Jerris RC, Kehl SC, Patel R, Pritt BS, Richter SS, Robinson-Dunn B, Schwartzman JD, Snyder JW, Telford S, III, Theel ES, Thomson RB, Jr, Weinstein MP, Yao JD. 2018. A guide to utilization of the microbiology laboratory for diagnosis of infectious diseases: 2018 update by the Infectious Diseases Society of America and the American Society

for Microbiology. Clin Infect Dis 67:e1–e94. https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciy381.
3. Filkins L, Hauser JR, Robinson-Dunn B, Tibbetts R, Boyanton BL, Revell P. 2020. American Society for Microbiology provides 2020 guidelines for detection and identification of group B *Streptococcus*. J Clin Microbiol 59:e01230-20. https://doi.org/10.1128/JCM.01230-20.
4. Shiflett SL, Robinson-Dunn B, Luper D. 2010. Botulinum toxin—*Clostridium botulinum*, p 16.5.1–16.5.3. *In* Garcia LS (ed), Clinical microbiology procedures handbook, 3rd ed. ASM Press, Washington, DC.
5. Robinson-Dunn B, Shah S, Jacobson R, Luper D. 2010. Brucellosis—*Brucella* spp., p 16.6.1–16.6.5. *In* Garcia LS (ed), Clinical microbiology procedures handbook, 3rd ed. ASM Press, Washington, DC.
6. Gray LD, Robinson-Dunn B. 2010. Special pathogens and employee safety, p 15.5.1.1–15.5.6. *In* Garcia LS (ed), Clinical microbiology procedures handbook, 3rd ed. ASM Press, Washington, DC.
7. Reference deleted.
8. Smith TL, Pearson ML, Wilcox KR, Cruz C, Lancaster MV, Robinson-Dunn B, Tenover FC, Zervos MJ, Band JD, White E, Jarvis WR. 1999. Emergence of vancomycin resistance in *Staphylococcus aureus*. Glycopeptide-Intermediate *Staphylococcus aureus* Working Group. N Engl J Med 340:493–501. https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJM199902183400701.
9. Tan KE, Ellis BC, Lee R, Stamper PD, Zhang SX, Carroll KC. 2012. Prospective evaluation of a matrix-assisted laser desorption ionization–time of flight mass spectrometry system in a hospital clinical microbiology laboratory for identification of bacteria and yeasts: a bench-by-bench study for assessing the impact on time to identification and cost-effectiveness. J Clin Microbiol 50:3301–3308. https://doi.org/10.1128/JCM.01405-12.
10. Suwantarat N, Grundy M, Rubin M, Harris R, Miller JA, Romagnoli M, Hanlon A, Tekle T, Ellis BC, Witter FR, Carroll KC. 2015. Recognition of *Streptococcus pseudoporcinus* colonization in women as a consequence of using matrix-assisted laser desorption ionization–time of flight mass spectrometry for group B *Streptococcus* identification. J Clin Microbiol 53:3926–3930. https://doi.org/10.1128/JCM.02363-15.
11. Garibaldi BT, Reimers M, Ernst N, Bova G, Nowakowski E, Bukowski J, Ellis BC, Smith C, Sauer L, Dionne K, Carroll KC, Maragakis LL, Parrish NM. 2017. Validation of autoclave protocols for successful decontamination of category A medical waste generated from care of patients with serious communicable diseases. J Clin Microbiol 55:545–551. https://doi.org/10.1128/JCM.02161-16.
12. Uhteg K, Jarrett J, Richards M, Howard C, Morehead E, Geahr M, Gluck L, Hanlon A, Ellis B, Kaur H, Simner P, Carroll KC, Mostafa HH. 2020. Comparing the analytical performance of three SARS-CoV-2 molecular diagnostic assays. J Clin Virol 127:104384. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcv.2020.104384.
13. Munson E. 2018. Biographical Feature: Peter H. Gilligan, Ph.D., D(ABMM), F(AAM). J Clin Microbiol 57:e01872-18. https://doi.org/10.1128/JCM.01872-18.
14. Mostafa H, Zimmerman S, Miller MB. Molecular microbiology. *In* Nader R (ed), Tietz textbook of laboratory medicine, 7th ed, in press. Elsevier, Cambridge, MA.
15. Miller MB, Gilligan P. 2012. Mechanisms of antimicrobial resistance. p 1421–1433. *In* Long SS, Pickering LK, Prober CG (ed), Principles and practice of pediatric infectious diseases, 4th ed. Churchill-Livingstone, New York, NY.
16. Miller MB, Bassler BA. 2001. Quorum sensing. *In* Dworkin M, Falkow S, Rosenberg E, Schleifer KH, Stackebrandt E (ed), The prokaryotes. Springer Verlag Press, New York, NY.
17. Plongla R, Miller MB 2017. Molecular testing for diseases associated with bacterial infections, p 139–150. *In* Coleman WB, Tsongalis GJ (ed), Diagnostic molecular pathology: a guide to applied molecular testing. Elsevier, Cambridge, MA.
18. Persing DH, Tenover FC, Hayden RT, Ieven M, Miller MB, Nolte FS, Yang YW, Van Belkum (ed). 2016. Molecular microbiology: diagnostic principles and practice, 3rd ed. ASM Press, Washington, DC.
19. Gilligan PH, Shapiro DS, Miller MB (ed). 2014. Cases in medical microbiology and infectious diseases, 4th ed. ASM Press, Washington, DC.
20. Mitchell SL, St George K, Rhoads DD, Butler-Wu SM, Dharmarha V, McNult P, Miller MB. 2020. Understanding, verifying, and implementing emergency use authorization molecular diagnostics for the detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA. J Clin Microbiol 58:e00796-20. https://doi.org/10.1128/JCM.00796-20.
21. Miller MB, Atrzadeh F, Burnham CA, Cavalieri S, Dunn J, Jones S, Mathews C, McNult P, Meduri J, Newhouse C, Newton D, Oberholzer M, Osiecki J, Pedersen D, Sweeney N, Whitfield N, Campos J. 2019. ASM Clinical and Public Health Microbiology Committee and the ASM Corporate Council. J Clin Microbiol 57:e00495-19. https://doi.org/10.1128/JCM.00495-19.
22. Charlton CL, Babady E, Ginocchio CC, Hatchette TF, Jerris RC, Li Y, Loeffelholz M, McCarter YS, Miller MB, Novak-Weekley S, Schuetz AN, Tang YW, Widen R, Drews SJ. 2019. Practical guidance for clinical microbiology laboratories: viruses causing acute respiratory tract infections. Clin Microbiol Rev 32:e00042-18. https://doi.org/10.1128/CMR.00042-18.
23. Forbes BA, Hall GS, Miller MB, Novak SM, Rowlinson MC, Salfinger M, Somoskövi A, Warshauer DM, Wilson ML. 2018. Practice guidelines for clinical microbiology laboratories: mycobacteria. Clin Microbiol Rev 31:e00038-17. https://doi.org/10.1128/CMR.00038-17.
24. Caliendo AM, Couturier MR, Ginocchio CC, Hanson KE, Miller MB, Walker KE, Frank GM, Infectious Diseases Society of America, American Society for Microbiology, Pan-American Society for Clinical Virology. 2016. Maintaining life-saving testing for patients with infectious diseases: Infectious Diseases Society of America, American Society for Microbiology, and Pan American Society for Clinical Virology recommendations on the regulation of laboratory-developed tests. Clin Infect Dis 63:151–154. https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciw260.