

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES:

### THE CMBD: FROM HOBBY TO PASSION; IT'S BEEN QUITE A RIDE

As many of you know, I am stepping down from my various positions at UAB and plan to retire on December 31, 2010 except for a 1/8 appointment at the VA which will allow me to continue to be the PI of a Merit Award grant. One of the hardest things to give up is the Directorship of the Center for Metabolic Bone Disease (CMBD), a program that truly started as a sidelight and "hobby" in the early to mid 1990's and developed into a passion that to me characterizes what is so very special about UAB. It started as a "grass roots" program, catalyzed by interested faculty who had a common interest in bone disease and bone biology and grew to become one of the leading bone programs in the country. There was no mandate (or funding) from UAB administration; however the collaborative culture of UAB and access to competitive internal monies (from the University-Wide Interdisciplinary Research Center program and HSF/GEF programs) allowed the vision to grow into an outstanding integrated program. The success of the program is not about me, but rather the overwhelming support and commitment of faculty, especially the CMBD Steering Committee, and staff.

In 1994, before email communications, I sent a note out to faculty through UAB Bulk Mail that anyone interested in any aspect of hard tissue (bone and teeth) disease or biology come to a meeting. Much to my surprise, some 25 people attended. That set in motion the development of the CMBD. We accepted the following mission statement:

**Mission:** The CMBD provides a broad-based multidisciplinary research, training, and service Center focused on metabolic bone disease with a general mission to support, catalyze, and integrate **clinical activities, clinical and translational research, basic research, and education**. These activities are integrated into a comprehensive program, emphasizing the critical interface between basic and clinical research. Educational activities characterize all components, including education for the patients, the general public, medical students, paramedical personnel, graduate students, and physicians in practice.

Sixteen years later, this statement still characterizes the efforts except for one point: the Center is no longer focused only on metabolic bone diseases (osteoporosis and related bone turnover disorders), but also generally on the biology and diseases of hard tissues (bone and teeth).

The following are some highlights of **key dates** that characterize the development of the CMBD:

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| 1. Multidisciplinary Clinic Opened – Phase I (Current Director: Sarah L. Morgan, MD, RD, FACP)  | 05/15/95 |
| 2. Designation as Center of Excellence by the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama  | 04/19/96 |
| 3. University-Wide Interdisciplinary Research Pilot Center Designation  | 10/01/96 |
| 4. University-Wide Interdisciplinary Research Center Designation  | 10/01/99 |
| 5. NIH Research Core Center (P30) – one of only five in the country   | 05/01/01 |
| 6. NIH Comprehensive Training Grant in Bone Biology and Disease   | 05/14/02 |
| 7. Huw F. Thomas, BDS, MS, PhD, hired as Dean, School of Dentistry; obtained an NIH U24 Oral Health Research Infrastructure grant and established the Institute of Oral Health Research | 01/01/04 |
| 8. Timothy M. Wick, PhD, hired as Professor/Chair, Dept of Biomedical Engineering and BERM Center   | 09/01/05 |
| 9. Shelby Building Space (~30,000 nsf) for BioMatrix Engineering and Regenerative Medicine  | 2006     |
| 10. NIH P30 competitive renewal funded  | 05/01/06 |
| 11. NIH T32 Institutional Research Training Grant competitive renewal funded  | 05/01/07 |
| 12. Bone Dysplasia and Connective Tissue Disorder Clinic Opened (Director: Maria Descartes, MD)   | 03/02/09 |

The CMBD currently has 90 members from nine schools and 30 departments. Collectively, the members have 283 grants totaling \$43,132,621, of which \$30,125,032 is directly related to bones and teeth. Since 1994, 31 new investigators have been recruited to UAB through partnerships with schools and departments. Bone research has grown substantially:

1996	1999	2001	2004	2006	2008	2010
\$ 6,288,570	\$ 16,895,808	\$ 21,129,472	\$ 28,328,279	\$ 30,060,613	\$ 31,754,782	\$ 30,125,032

The CMBD has funded 27 pilot projects (including six currently funded projects). Of the 21 completed, 19 of the PIs have gone on to become independently funded, a record that is truly extraordinary.

It has been great fun and I look forward to seeing the programs continue to thrive and grow. Thanks to so many of you, but especially to Marsha Moore, Cindy Casey (my assistants) and Samuel Brown, Jr., EdD (my advisor).

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