

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

This 28th instalment of the Annual Research Conference and Workshop marks the continuance of a rich history of the Faculty of the Medical Sciences' support of the institution's overall mission to advance education, create knowledge and foster development of the Caribbean region and beyond. The 2019 conference organizing team has worked assiduously to offer a package worthy of comparison to its predecessors. After much deliberation, the decided theme **Genomics in Health: Medical, Ethical and Societal Matters** was felt would balance research relevance across a sufficiently wide cross-section of the faculty as well as appeal to the curiosity of those of us not so intimately involved with the topic. Crafting a title and fine-tuning a conference programme to achieve this end was an engagement of science and art, a purposive effort to present a holistic assessment of a concept itself holistic in nature – genomics, the interrelationships of all genes which underlie the complex functioning of an individual and the study of which is poised to play increasingly pivotal roles in combating disease and promoting wellness.

We warmly welcome Professor Franklyn Prendergast as our 2019 Sir Kenneth Standard Distinguished Lecturer, a remarkably accomplished yet humble giant who has risen from among us. Hailing from Linstead, St Catherine in Jamaica, he is a 1960s product of this very faculty. From here, his professional journey took him across the pond to the University of Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar in 1969 and then on to the 'Land of 10 000 Lakes' to pursue graduate studies and build an impressive career at the Mayo Clinic. He has held professorships in Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Molecular Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics and was Director of the Mayo Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Mayo Clinic Center for Individualized Medicine. Along the way, Professor Prendergast has been recognised both locally and in the United States of America, having received Distinguished Alumnus awards from The University of the West Indies (UWI) in 1991 and Mayo (2019), honorary doctoral degrees from Purdue University (1994) and The UWI (2004), and the Gold Musgrave Award for outstanding contribution to science from the Institute of Jamaica (2003), among numerous other accolades.

Professor Prendergast will share with us on three occasions during this conference. His talk on **Notes on Population Health from a Reasonably Informed and Concerned Observer** during the opening ceremony reflects on the legacy of Sir Kenneth Standard and considerations for future challenges; his anecdotes supporting that 'effective biomed-

cal research projects evolve from informed curiosity' will add to the offerings at the Meet the Professors Breakfast Workshop; and his plenary lecture on **Genomics in Clinical Medicine: Hope, Hype and Challenges** will be delivered at the Main Research Workshop.

We invite you to attend our series of events which we trust will excite and stimulate your intellectual interest. Join us for our opening ceremony as well as oral and poster presentations from student and faculty researchers on the Thursday. Come out early on Friday morning to our 'Meet the Professors' breakfast session primarily aimed at inspiring the clinician in building an academic career, but certainly all are welcome to listen to the success stories of home-grown clinicians who are making strides in research here and abroad. Stay for our main (theme-based) workshop on Friday which begins with **Genomics 101** distinguishing genetics and genomics and will feature some of our local researchers and clinicians as well as a team from the State University of New York (SUNY) – a UWI collaborative network. Close off the 2019 experience on Sunday with the Ethics Seminar, guided by an extension of the theme, simply yet pertinently asking 'Should We Care?' There we will explore the benefits and risks of genome research in food, insects and humans; matters of genetic screening and its implications for the individual and insurance companies; legal and ethical issues of gene editing and whether we have gone too far as well as the sensitive issues surrounding surrogacy.

Added to the offerings this year are special displays on Zebrafish research and gene therapy in the brain. We also sincerely thank our sponsors for partnering with us and invite you to visit their booths.

The Faculty of Medical Sciences Annual Research Conference and Workshop 2019 promises to ignite our consciousness to the possibilities that lie ahead. Genomics will be the buzz word for years to come – you do not want to miss the dialogue and learn about exciting research opportunities. Please join us!

Dr Christine Walters

Chair

Organizing Committee

Annual Research Conference and Workshop 2019

Faculty of Medical Sciences

The University of the West Indies, Mona

Jamaica