NIEHS researcher Donald Cook receives tenure

By Robin Arnette

For many scientists, receiving tenure, or a permanent research position, is an important professional milestone. The appointment enables them to continue delving into the complexities of nature, while having some job security. One of the latest scientists at NIEHS to receive tenure is Donald Cook, Ph.D., a lead researcher in the Laboratory of Respiratory Biology. Cook has been at NIEHS since 2005 and studies how inhaled allergens and environmental pollutants affect the lungs.

In addition to his many accomplishments, Cook is also an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Immunology at Duke University School of Medicine. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

Cook received his B.S. and Ph.D. in microbiology and immunology from McGill University in Montreal, and began his research career in 1990 under the tutelage of Nobel Laureate Oliver Smithies, D.Phil., at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine. As a postdoctoral fellow in Smithies lab, Cook co-authored several articles that appeared in prestigious journals, such as Science and Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

When Cook completed his fellowship in 1996, he joined Schering-Plough Research Institute in Kenilworth, N.J., as an associate principal scientist, and quickly rose to the position of principal scientist. He left Schering-Plough to pursue an academic position as an assistant professor in the Division of Pulmonary, Allergy, and Critical Care Medicine at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C. After four years at Duke, he joined NIEHS to head the Immunogenetics Group.

"I feel very honored because there are so many truly outstanding tenured investigators at NIEHS," Cook said, after hearing word of his tenure appointment. "I am grateful to the members of my laboratory for their hard work, and to many other people at NIEHS that have given me indispensable help and support over the past several years."

One of the people who advised Cook during his time at NIEHS is Anton Jetten, Ph.D., head of the Laboratory of Respiratory Biology. He noted that Cook's lung studies have helped broaden the knowledge of respiratory diseases, by identifying potential targets in the treatment of allergic asthma.

"Don's studies have significantly advanced our understanding of how environmental agents impact the cells and molecular pathways that orchestrate allergic responses in the lung," Jetten said.

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