

NIEHS welcomes Nanjing Medical University delegation

By Eddy Ball

When leaders of the [Nanjing Medical University \(NMU\) School of Public Health \(SPH\)](http://www.atoo86.com/njmu/College.aspx?c=778)

(<http://www.atoo86.com/njmu/College.aspx?c=778>)

set out to advance the school's environmental health science curriculum, they decided to pursue a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with leading U.S. biomedical research centers at Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University (JHU), and, not surprisingly, NIEHS. The trip to North Carolina was part of the first visit to the U.S. for the postdocs and students in the delegation.

Even before the 16 NMU scientists, administrators, and trainees made their visit to NIEHS July 24, the day after signing an MOU with the JHU Bloomberg School of Public Health, they surely anticipated finding common ground with NIEHS scientists. But the Chinese scientists may not have expected to discover a near mirror image of their own goals, as presented in opening remarks by Dean of NMU SPH Feng Chen, Ph.D., reflected in a presentation by NIEHS Scientific Director Darryl Zeldin, M.D., on the Institute's strategic plan.



Chen, left, shook hands with JHU Bloomberg School of Public Health Dean Michael Klag, M.D., after signing an MOU between NMU and JHU July 23 in Baltimore. (Photo courtesy of JHU)

Organizations with much in common

"There are such strong similarities and shared interests in various aspects of both toxicology and environmental health, between the two organizations," said lead researcher Kenneth Korach, Ph.D., head of the NIEHS Laboratory of Reproductive and Developmental Toxicology. Korach made the initial contact with NMU during a visit to Nanjing in 2011, when he spoke with then SPH Dean Hongbing Shen, M.D., Ph.D., who is now NMU vice president for research.

According to Korach, the fit is a good one between the leading U.S. environmental health sciences research center and the highly rated Chinese medical university. "These are individuals who are very research science oriented," Korach said of his NMU colleagues. "They had trained in the U.S., and they are obviously very interested in increasing the stature and position of Nanjing."

Korach said he expects NMU and NIEHS to finalize their MOU in the near future, increasing collaborations and training opportunities for NMU graduate students, fellows, and junior scientists, possibly during a future visit to China by Korach and Zeldin.

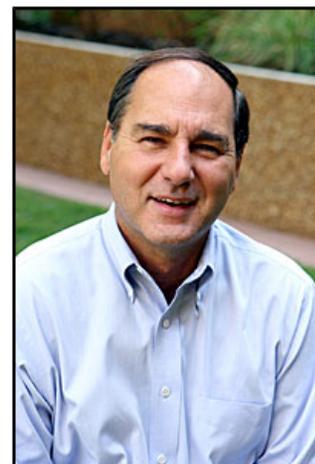
A plan to share research and training resources

Presenters Zeldin and Korach were joined by other leading scientists at NIEHS, including John Bucher, Ph.D., associate director of NTP; Dale Sandler, Ph.D., head of the Epidemiology Branch (EB); Hugh Tilson, Ph.D., editor in chief of Environmental Health Perspectives; Allen Wilcox, M.D., Ph.D., head of the EB Reproductive Epidemiology Group; Stephanie London, MD., Dr.P.H., head of the EB Genetics, Environment, and Respiratory Disease Group; and David Umbach, Ph.D., a staff scientist in the Biostatistics Branch.

The lead researcher in the delegation was Yankai Xia, M.D., Ph.D., head of what the Chinese call a Key lab, established with targeted national government funding at NMU. His research interests combine epidemiology, especially birth cohorts and common birth defects studies, with stem cell toxicology, and developmental and reproductive toxicology. Xia and others in the delegation expressed special interest in NIEHS work with large cohorts in the area of molecular epidemiology, such as the GuLF STUDY and Sister Study.

Following the program, the visitors enjoyed a tour of the Institute lead by John Schelp, special assistant for community engagement and outreach in the NIEHS Office of Science Education and Diversity.

The day after their visit to NIEHS, the NMU delegation took advantage of their proximity to Cary, for a visit to scientific software leader SAS, which had a special appeal for Chen and several others in the delegation who are biostatisticians with interests in big data analysis.



Korach, above, talked further with Xia, during Xia's visit to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Research Triangle Park, N.C., in early 2011. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

The Environmental Factor is produced monthly by the [National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences \(NIEHS\)](#)
(<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/>)

, Office of Communications and Public Liaison. The content is not copyrighted, and it can be reprinted without permission. If you use parts of Environmental Factor in your publication, we ask that you provide us with a copy for our records. We welcome your [comments and suggestions](#).
(bruskec@niehs.nih.gov)

This page URL: NIEHS website: <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/>
Email the Web Manager at webmanager@niehs.nih.gov