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## CAP Annual Meeting – A Review Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> 2020

The College of American Pathologists (CAP) virtual annual meeting is providing opportunities to get up to speed on emerging biomarkers, gauge the future of the coronavirus pandemic, and take part in professional networking from the comfort of home. On Tuesday, October 13, highlights included a keynote address by Dr. Anthony Fauci and an update on jobs, as detailed below by Informa Pharma Intelligence.

### **Dr. Tony Fauci reviews highs and lows of COVID pandemic response**

The National Institutes of Health's Dr. Tony Fauci delivered a rather gloomy assessment of the state of the coronavirus pandemic in the U.S. during a keynote address on Tuesday.

As director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and the expert figurehead of the White House response to the coronavirus pandemic, Fauci's opinions hold a lot of weight. Fauci outlined the pandemic lay of the land and then fielded multiple questions from CAP President Dr. Patrick Godbey and CAP members.

Here we are — now on October 13 and entering into the cool months of mid-fall and the cold months of winter — and we find ourselves in a difficult situation, Fauci said. The goal was to have control over the infection at this point in time, but instead the country is seeing from 40,000 to 50,000 new cases every day. In parts of the country that are experiencing cooler weather and where more activity is moving indoors, an uptick in test positivity rate is being reported. Whereas the optimal rate is 3% or less, or ideally lower than 1%, a number of states are above that number, which is highly predictive of a resurgence with an associated increase in the hospitalization rates and ultimately deaths, he said.

To avoid new lockdowns, it's important to follow basic guidance on frequent hand washing, universal masking, social distancing, avoiding crowds, and moving activities outside where possible, Fauci advised.

In April, the White House published its *Opening Up America Again* guidelines, which called for a three-phased approach to getting the economy going again.

"We want to be able to open up the country and the economy in a prudent, safe way by following guidelines that we put out months and months ago," Fauci said.

In its push to reopen, the leadership put the responsibility on states to manage the implementation of testing and rapid response programs, including guidance on what technologies were appropriate and ensuring sufficient testing capacity and supplies.

Fauci was asked to outline what went right and what has gone wrong in the pandemic response. He praised the decision to cut off travel from China and later Europe, as well as New York's ability to turn

around a very bad situation. Initially, the New York metropolitan area was hit very badly, but it rebounded and has been able to get the case positivity rate down below 1%, he pointed out.

Fauci also noted that the development of vaccines is proceeding very well, with 5 candidates in Phase III development. It is hoped that an answer on safety and effectiveness will come by November or December, but possibly earlier, paving the way for dosing of vulnerable people at the end of 2020 and into 2021. Asked why healthcare professionals should trust coronavirus vaccines given the rush for testing and production, Fauci expressed strong confidence in the clinical trials process, which involves review by an independent data and safety monitoring board.

As for what didn't go so well, Fauci cited the inadequacies of the testing system at the beginning of the pandemic. Initially, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was the only entity with an authorized test and it turned out to be faulty. Ultimately, the private sector made tests available for widespread distribution.

"There were considerable missteps in the availability of testing when we needed to do widespread testing early on," Fauci said.

Asked about what could be done to alleviate continued shortages of reagents for nucleic acid testing, Fauci responded that centrally there is a perception that this issue had been addressed and that it was "disconcerting" to hear otherwise in October 2020 from people on the ground and in the trenches.

Fauci also cited a lack of resources and preparedness of local public health systems in conducting testing, requiring isolation, and contact tracing. Furthermore, the decentralized system in the U.S., which offers flexibility and power to states has a lot of positive aspects, but has downsides in a pandemic where certain things need to be coordinated in a uniform way, he said. Several states did not abide by public health recommendations, he noted.

"That somewhat of a discordant response I think led to greater number of cases than we should have had," Fauci said. "I think these are all lessons that will be discussed in great detail when this is behind us."

"And it will be behind us one day and we will have the opportunity to do a postmortem and figure out what we can do much better the next time around," he added.

The novel coronavirus goes far beyond respiratory effects and Fauci sees pathologists as well-positioned to play a much greater role in assessing damage to multiple organ systems.

"I think this is open season for pathologists to contribute in a great way to understanding the pathogenesis of this disease," he said.

### **Dr. R. Bruce Williams named Pathologist of the Year**

Louisiana-based pathologist Dr. R. Bruce Williams has picked up the 2020 CAP Pathologist of the Year Award.

CAP President Godbey announced the award, which recognizes contributions to the field of pathology and to CAP, during the meeting's keynote presentation on Tuesday.

Williams is a founding member of the Delta Pathology Group in Lafayette, La., where he serves as practice manager and laboratory director. He is also an associate clinical professor of pathology at Louisiana State University Medical Center-Shreveport.

Williams served for 40 years as a CAP fellow and as president from 2015-2017. Among many other positions held over the years, he has been chair of CAP's Commission on Laboratory Accreditation and a member of the organization's Accreditation Committee. Announcing the award during the keynote address, Godbey said that Williams had a long list of career awards and achievements and that his contributions to CAP accreditation are "truly unparalleled."

Pathologist of the Year was one of CAP's many [Meritorious Service Awards](#) for 2020. Others were granted in recognition of work in patient advocacy, laboratory improvement, lifetime achievement, public service, communication, and education.

Dr. Pavandeep Gill was named CAP Resident of the Year. Gill's activities include membership in CAP's Cancer Committee from 2018-2019 and participation in the organization's Residents Forum. Gill completed her residency at the University of Alberta in Canada and is now a dermatopathology fellow at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

### **Taking the temperature of pathology job market**

At last year's CAP meeting, which was held in September at a resort in Orlando, CAP leaders expressed concern that residents were getting negative messages about job prospects and presented survey data of practice leaders that suggested a more positive outlook.

At this year's virtual event, Dr. Cindy McCloskey, associate professor and pathology residency program director at the University of Oklahoma, addressed employment trends for newly trained pathologists during a Q&A session on Tuesday.

For the past eight years, the job market has been very stable and if anything it has been improving, she said, though there are some uncertainties related to the impact of the coronavirus. Among other topics, McCloskey addressed the following questions:

**Q.** What is the most common question you get about the job market in general?

**A.** The main thing residents and fellows want to know is how easy/difficult it is to get a job. Surveys suggest that newly trained pathologists have been finding jobs and are finding positions that they are highly satisfied with. It will, however, take some legwork to find jobs through networking and by word of mouth.

**Q.** How are things looking in terms of demand for fellowship training?

**A.** Cytopathology and hematopathology remain high in demand.

"That has been a consistent trend and I would be surprised if it changed too much going forward," McCloskey said.

**Q.** Have there been any changes in the way of which specialties are becoming more desirable?

**A.** There hasn't been a significant change in terms of the areas of subspecialization, but there has been a slight trend for more pathologists to end up in academic practice versus private practice.

**Q.** Is it necessary to have more than one fellowship?

**A.** It's important to look at your own particular career goals and what fellowships would be needed to achieve them. Ask yourself what you want to do and where you want to end up.

"I don't think there is a single right answer you can apply to the entire population," she said.

**Q.** How important is it to do more than one fellowship specifically due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

**A.** We are not currently seeing a complete shutdown of elective procedures as was seen in March and April. The more surgeries that are done, the more specimens go to pathologists, so avoiding a massive shutdown of surgical procedures would definitely be better for the pathology job market. It's unclear how many will opt for [another] fellowship instead of applying for jobs; end-2020 survey data will show how newly trained pathologists responded to the pandemic.

**Q.** What are good online sources for jobs besides *PathologyOutlines.com*?

**A.** In surveys, 35% of respondents said that they landed their job through a listing on Pathology Outlines. But while Pathology Outlines probably has, at least for now, somewhat of a monopoly, another common way to get a job is through networking and word of mouth. It's also a good idea for graduates to reach out to practices they want to work for directly and take their pulse, McCloskey advised.

**Q.** Are changes expected for job applicants in getting visas?

**A.** Things have been up in the air when it comes to changes in immigration policy. The picture could look different after the election.