Robert Yee, Ph.D., In Memoriam

June 28, 1927 – January 19, 2019

(Obituary)
Dr. Robert B. Yee, age 91, died on January 19 in Pittsburgh. I state this with great sadness, as Bob was a towering figure over seven decades in this department, school and university. Dr. Yee was the assistant chair of IDM under our chairman Dr. Monto Ho for many years. Bob would never say this, but we all knew that Monto was greatly dependent on Bob’s organizational skills in helping him run the department. With his passing we lost the most dedicated faculty member of our department, and particularly to our graduate students. This latter point may sound simple and of limited consequence. It was, however, what Bob rightfully knew was the essence of our profession as a school – teaching those men and women who would become leaders in our mission to identify, treat and prevent infectious diseases throughout the world. With this in mind, in his honor Monto created the Bob Yee scholarship fund in 1990. As chairman, I made this an annual scholarship award exclusively providing funds for our best master’s degree students.

Several memories of Bob stand out to me, and I am sure to those of you who knew him. Bob was diminutive in physical stature, yet always full of energy and optimism. In the pre-smoking prohibition era, Bob would relish puffing on his pipe while in deep thought, bobbing quietly back and forth on each foot. Once he had it right, he clearly detailed his thoughts without unnecessary embellishment. Bob dressed plainly, without pretention - simple but proper. He would always give a hardy, sincere greeting to anyone who passed him in the hallway, referring to students as Miss Jones or Mr. Smith – a thoughtful, caring habit that too few of us have today. And he preferred the formality of being referred to as “Dr. Yee” by the students.

Dr. Yee was the pioneer along with his friend Dr. Russ Rycheck in starting (pushing!) our school into the computer age in the late 1980s when the rest of us had no idea. Indeed, he constantly upgraded our department’s computer and software capabilities. Bob was strong willed about this – he was adamant that we use Word Perfect instead of Word for many years beyond when Microsoft began to dominate the field. He was absolutely correct about this – it is a shame that the Microsoft monopoly has effectively eliminated its superior competitor.

You may recall that a newly discovered bacteria was named after Dr. Yee several years ago by our former student Dr. Robbin Weyant (MS, 1982) at the CDC https://www.utimes.pitt.edu/archives/?p=1371 – quite a unique honor! In the early days of the Legionella outbreaks, Dr. Yee and his student Bob Wadowsky (ScD, 1983) improved the charcoal-based medium used to isolate this bacteria by adding glycine, vancomycin and polymyxin (Wadowsky, R.M. and R.B. Yee. 1981. Glycine-Containing Selective Medium for Isolation of Legionellaceae from Environmental Specimens. Appl. and Environ. Micro.; 42:768-772).

Bob’s history in the school began in 1952, only four years after the school was created. He truly was one of our school’s founding fathers. We were fortunate that Dr. Yee gave an extensive historical account of the early days of the Graduate School of Public Health in an interview several years ago (page 4 of 2013 IDM Newsletter). What is not mentioned is that Bob and Monto saved this department several times when it was threatened to lose its autonomy and be consumed by another department.

Bob also was, surprising given his total dedication to the microbiology profession, an expert horticulturist able to grow gorgeous orchids as well as many other house plants and vegetables.

In closing, I said this in my tribute for Monto Ho and now for Bob Yee, borrowing from a poem by Vincent Kuo, “We see further at this point in life, for upon shoulders of Giants we stand.”

God bless, Bob.

Sincerely,
Robert Yee, PhD., In Memoriam

Photos taken from the Opening of IDM’s New Lab Pavilion (2013)

Dr. Velpandi Ayyavoo, Mrs. Mary White, Dr. Phalguni Gupta, Dr. Robert Yee, Dr. Charles Rinaldo and Becky Bosko Marino, 2014 IDM PhD Graduate & Emilee Knowlton, 2012 IDM PhD Graduate

Drs. Robert Yee, Phalguni Gupta, Charles Rinaldo and Mrs. Mary White

Drs. Todd Reinhart, Robert Yee and Charles Rinaldo

Photo taken from the IDM Annual Meeting, September 2012

Dr. Charles Rinaldo, Mrs. Carol Ho, Dr. Monto Ho, Dr. Mary Kay Breining, Dr. John Armstrong, Dr. Bob Yee and Dr. Phalguni Gupta
Thanks to the alumni and others who have donated to the Bob Yee Scholarship Fund. The establishment of this Fund is one of the greatest highlights of my career. As a result, we have been able to provide some financial support to a few of the masters students, especially ones pursuing a career in public health. We may someday be able to support all of the masters students. To reach this goal, I hope all of you will become sustaining donors by contributing $25 annually to the fund. Once again, thank you. I miss the good old days working with all of you. I remember each and everyone of you.

- Bob Yee
IDM Announces 2018/19 Bob Yee Public Health Scholarship Recipients

Instituted in 2004 to recognize academic excellence among incoming Master of Public Health and Master of Science students, the IDM Bob Yee Public Health Scholarship has again been awarded to three new master’s level students. The scholarship is based on academic merit which includes undergraduate grades and Graduate Record Examination scores. The student’s letters of recommendation are also reviewed during the selection process. This year’s recipients are:

Subramanian Thothathri (MS)

- **Undergrad:** Sastra University
- **Major:** Bioengineering
- **Hometown:** Chennai, India
- **Hobbies:** mixed martial arts, pizza & music

Kelsey Simon (MPH-PEL)

- **Undergrad:** University of Pittsburgh
- **Major:** Biology
- **Hometown:** Buffalo, NY
- **Interests:** swimming, hiking, reading and making pasta

Cheyenne Annarumo (MPH-MIC)

- **Undergrad:** Gannon University
- **Major:** Biology/Pre-Med Program
- **Hometown:** Ellwood City, PA
- **Interests:** concerts, sporting events, working out & puppies

Support for this scholarship is provided by the Bob Yee Fund in the department. Donations to this fund can be made by personal check to the University of Pittsburgh, subscript “The Bob Yee Fund”, and sent to: University of Pittsburgh, Graduate School of Public Health, Attn: Ms. Robin Tierno, 2116 Public Health, 130 DeSoto Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15261. Contact Ms. Tierno with questions at: 412-624-3105 or email: rtierno@pitt.edu
Memories of Dr. Bob Yee shared by several of his IDM colleagues, past and present......

Bob was the best. In 1974, when I worked for the PA DOH/CDC STD, I traveled to Pittsburgh to take a course from Bob, using darkfield microscopy to diagnosis T pallidum. He was a true “public health” man. He was always truthful, humble and helpful. The world should be filled with people who are as intellectually honest as Bob Yee. Missed he will be.

Lawrence Kingsley, DrPh

TRULY SORRY TO HEAR OF BOB’S PASSING. HE LOVED IDM, THE STUDENTS, AND HIS COLLEAGUES. I AM SO LUCKY TO HAVE WORKED WITH HIM AS A STUDENT AND COLLEAGUE. NOT A DAY GOES BY THAT I DON’T THINK OF HIM OR SOMETHING HE TAUGHT ME OR IMPRESSED ME WITH.

ROBERT WADOWSKY, PHD

I AM SO SADDENED TO HEAR THE NEWS. DR YEE HAD ALWAYS BEEN SO SUPPORTIVE TO ALL THE PHD AND MASTER STUDENTS IN OUR DEPARTMENT FOR SO MANY YEARS.

YUE CHEN, PHD

Very sad news. He is one of the main reasons our department is what it is today.

Jeremy Martinson, DPhil

REALLY SAD TO HEAR. BOB WAS A TIRELESS ENTHUSIAST OF IDM, STUDENTS, COMPUTERS AND SCIENCE. HE TAUGHT ME DOS COMMANDS 27 EARS AGO!

JOHN MELLORS, MD
Sad to hear. Saw him a few months ago in GSPH. He genuinely cared about the department and the program. He is also an avid orchid grower. He gave me my first orchid plant 17 years ago when I first joined IDM. I still have that plant.

Velpandi Ayyavoo, PhD

This is indeed very sad news. Dr. Yee was the champion for IDM...always supportive of our mission, our faculty, students and staff. He was very important to me as he offered thoughtful advice, encouragement, ideas which was always done so with enthusiasm that was energizing and so helpful.

Linda Frank, PhD, MSN, ACRN, FAAN

I only met Bob a few times during my 25 year tenure here, but I know from talking with both students and faculty in IDM during this time that he was loved by the students and respected by the faculty. I can’t think of greater tributes to a faculty member.

Frank Jenkins, PhD

I have been so sad since I heard the news of Dr. Yee’s passing. I have known Dr. Yee for 37 years (more than half my life). When I began working for him back in 1982 as a secretary, we were still using typewriters. When computers replaced typewriters, he taught me everything I needed to know. I can honestly say, I learned from the Best!

While not a man of great stature, he could be intimidating. However, you could walk by him in the hallways a dozen times a day and every time he would said, “Hello! How are you?”, and he meant it. He really wanted to know how you were.

After retirement, he still came around for meetings/luncheons with other retirees and always made a point to stop by my office to talk about the old days. I really enjoyed each and every visit. I’m going to miss that man, more than I already do.

Judy Malenka
By profession, Debra Dennison is the coordinator of capacity building at the HIV Prevention and Care Project, Department of Infectious Diseases and Microbiology. Her responsibilities include serving as a resource to the PA State Department of Health’s HIV/AIDS Division in its promotion of HIV/AIDS prevention and care. This includes providing training and technical assistance on various Centers for Disease Control and Prevention evidence-based interventions and strategies. Additional efforts include the development and implementation of program activities designed to build the capacity of Pennsylvania’s faith-based organizations to address HIV/AIDS at the local level from a social justice perspective.

Debra has serviced as a training consultant for various organizations including the National Minority AIDS Council, the Balm in Gilead Inc., and CDC’s Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention HIV/AIDS Capacity Building branch. She presently serves as a trainer consultant for ETR HIV Capacity Building WILLOW grant.

Currently, Debra serves as a member of the Regional HIV Collaborative facilitated by the Jewish Health Care Foundation and board member of Message Carriers, a substance abuse-focused agency providing advocacy and recovery related services to individuals and family members impacted by addiction and/or mental health disorders.

Debra possesses over 35 years of public health experience. She is the wife of Rev. Stanley C. Dennison, pastor of Homewood AME Zion Church, and the mother of three.
Following international recognition with the 2017 Diagnostic Virology Award from the Pan American Society for Clinical Virology, Dr. Kirsten St. George (IDM 2004), Chief of the Laboratory of Viral Diseases at the New York State Department of Health, was presented with the Alumni Award from the University of South Australia in Adelaide. During the award ceremony, Vice Chancellor Professor David Lloyd commented on the significant contributions Dr. St. George has made during her career.

Starting with basic research in South Australia in the 1980s, she moved to Tasmania, establishing the first centralized virology diagnostic laboratory and the first state HIV reference laboratory. In the early 1990s she moved to Pittsburgh, where she worked primarily on the development of sensitive methods for the early detection of viral infections in transplant recipients and earned a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh with research on the evolution of antiviral resistant viruses.

Dr. St. George moved to Albany, NY, and joined the Wadsworth Center in 2004. Her group performs diagnostic reference and surveillance testing, applied research, has regulatory oversight of approximately 300 clinical virology laboratories, and collaborates with several basic research scientists. They are increasingly using next generation sequencing for the characterization of viruses and the investigation of viral evolution and molecular epidemiology.

Dr. St. George’s laboratory is also a National Influenza Reference Center, National Reference Center for Vaccine Preventable Diseases, National Calicinet Outbreak Center and Antiviral Resistance Reference Center for Influenza, providing major public health support to the CDC. Dr. St. George has played a key role in the writing of numerous virology practice guidance documents and led the laboratory response efforts for countless complicated case investigations and major viral disease outbreaks. She also serves on several federal advisory boards and committees.

Bridget Calhoun, DrPH, PA-C, completed her doctoral degree in public health at GSPH in the Department of Infectious Diseases and Microbiology in 2008. Under the guidance of Dr. Lawrence Kingsley, she completed her dissertation on the metabolic consequences of antiretroviral therapy. She is a physician assistant who worked in transplant surgery at UPMC prior to enrolling in the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. For the last 17 years, she has been the Chairman of the Department of Physician Assistant Studies at Duquesne University which is consistently ranked among the top 25 physician assistant training programs in the country. In addition to her responsibilities at Duquesne University, she continues to work one day per week at the Pitt Men's Study, which is the local clinic of the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS), the longest observational HIV study in the world. Dr. Calhoun is the liaison to the Pennsylvania Department of Health from the Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants, and is a senior author of the national recertification examination for physician assistants. She has traveled with health science students to several countries throughout Africa and to the International Red Cross in Geneva, Switzerland. She has a strong interest in disparities in healthcare and has taught a 3 credit, undergraduate course in disparities in healthcare at Duquesne University for the past 10 years.
Please join us in applauding the following for their service and commitment to the Department of Infectious Diseases and Microbiology.

5 Years
Jessica McGuinness, Clinical Assistant, Pitt Men’s Study Clinic

10 years
Lissa Foster, Fiscal Administrator, for the MidAtlantic AETC

20 years
Beth Junecko, Lab Manager

30 years
Cheryl Austin, Grants Administrator
LuAnn Borowski, Flow Cytometry Specialist

IDM Staff Recognition
June 26, 2018

IDM Departmental Awards
Kelsey Messerschmidt, MPH Program
Bethany Flage, MS Program
Roberta Mettus, MS Program
Renee Anderko, PhD Program

School-wide Awards: Master’s First Prize
Vatsala Rangachar Srinivasa, MPH Program

Dean’s Day Competition

Pictured R-L: Dr. Velpandi Ayyavoo, Renee Anderko, Roberta Mettus, Bethany Flage, Kelsey Messerschmidt and Dr. Donald Burke, Dean of Public Health

Vatsala Rangachar Srinivasa pictured with Dr. Donald Burke
Phalguni Gupta, PhD and Simon Barratt-Boyes, BVSc, PhD are leading a group of Pitt faculty engaged in AIDS research who received a 1 million dollar T32 training grant renewal from the NIH for five years. This grant is now in its 13th year. This year the grant will train three new predoctoral researchers, and two have been reappointed for an additional year in the study of HIV/AIDS. The PART Program is based on concepts of interdisciplinary courses and collaborative basic research that provide the foundation for understanding HIV/AIDS and controlling the epidemic.

Congratulations to this year’s trainees:

Appointed Fellowship 2017/2018

Renee Anderko (IDM Program)
Research: “Phenotypic and Functional Characterization of NK Cells in HIV-1 Infection”
Mentor: Robbie Mailliard, PhD

Adam Kleinman (MVM Program)
Research: “Monitoring the Effects of Cytoreduction on the Size and Diversity of the SIV Latent Reservoir in Rhesus Macaques on Antiretroviral Therapy with Cyclophosphamide”
Mentor: Christian Apetrei, MD, PhD

Abigail Gerberick (IDM Program)
Research: Antigen-presenting Cell Mediated Trans Infection and the HIV Reservoir
Mentor: Giovanna Rappocciolo, PhD

Reappointed 2nd yr. Fellowship

Nicole Grant (IDM Program)
Research: “Uncovering Functional and Spatial T Cell Parameters in Granuloma Pathology and Bacterial Control in Mycobacterium Tuberculosis Infection of Non-Human Primates”
Mentor: JoAnne Flynn, PhD

Benni Vargas (MVM Program)
Research: “Silencing the HIV Provirus”
Mentor: Nic Sluis-Cremer, PhD
And the Award Goes To ……

IDM Annual Research Day
September 13, 2018

Congratulations to this year’s Poster Winners!!!

PhD Presentations

1st Place Tie:
Jennifer Bowling

“Natural History of Pneumonic Tularemia in Outbred New Zealand White Rabbits”
Advisor: Dr. Douglas Reed

1st Place Tie:
Nicole Grant

“Investigating Cellular Characteristics of Early and Late TB Granulomas in Non-Human Primates”
Advisor: Dr. Joanne Flynn

2nd Place:
Henry Ma

“Radiofrequency Telemetry Monitoring of Inhalational Alphavirus Disease in Cynomolgus Macaques Provide Biomarkers for Infection”
Advisor: Dr. Douglas Reed

3rd Place:
Priyanka Talukdar

“Type III Interferons are Expressed by Epithelioid Macrophages Tuberculosis Granuloma”
Advisor: Dr. Joshua Mattila
MPH-MIC Presentations

1st Place:
Kelsey Messerschmidt

“A Logistical review of Points-of-Dispensing Sites in Allegheny County”
Advisor: Dr. Mackey Friedman

2nd Place:
Lindsay Summers

“Building Skills at the Local Level: A Competency Bases Approach to Public Health Workforce Development”
Advisor: Dr. Sarah Krier

2nd Place:
Jessica Salerno

“Preliminary Characterization of Reasons behind Measles Undervaccination in Europe and the United States”
Advisor: Dr. Sarah Krier
MPH-PEL Presentations

1st Place: Alexandra Weissman

“Development of a Rapid Clinical Flow Cytometric Assay of Neutrophil Cell-Surface Biomarkers”
Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Martinson

2nd Place: Justin Dutta

“Follistatin-Like Protein 1 Deficiency Plays a Protective Role in Klebsiella pneumonia Infection via Innate Immunity Mechanisms”
Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Martinson

3rd Place: Cory Hayes

“Predicting Hospital Readmission Risk: Conducting a Retrospective Cohort to Assess and Validate the Accuracy of a Real-Time Multiple Logistic regression Tool for Accessing the Likelihood of Patient Readmission Upon Discharge”
Advisor: Dr. Mohammed Yassin
CONGRATULATIONS to our June 2018 Graduates

**PhD Defense**

**Diana Campbell Delucia**, “Cellular Cholesterol Regulation of HIV-1 Trafficking During Macrophage-Mediated Trans Infection”. Advisor: Dr. Giovanna Rappocciolo

**Parichat Duangkhao**, “Defining Dengue Virus Infection in Human Skin”. Advisor: Dr. Simon Barratt-Boyes

**Lyndsay Avery**, “Tim-3 Co-stimulation Promotes Short-Lived Effector T Cells, Restricts Memory Precursors, and is Dispensable for T Cell Exhaustion”. Advisor: Dr. Lawrence Kane

**MS Defense**

**Jen Burwinkel**, “Using Tissue Culture to Model Early Events in Francisella tularensis Pathogenesis”. Advisor: Dr. Douglas Reed

**JoAnna Shaw**, “Identification of Novel Bacterial MurA Inhibitors”. Advisor: Dr. Nic Sluis-Cremer

**Matthew Good**, “Impact of Zika Virus on Human Dendritic Cells”. Advisor: Dr. Robbie Mailliard


**MPH-MIC Defense**

**Vatsala Rangachar Srinivasa**, “Clostridium difficile Infection Spread within the Hospital Environment”. Advisor: Dr. Larry Kingsley

**Emily Schmitz**, “Multidrug-Resistant Organisms (MDRO): Cost-Effective Analysis of Horizontal vs. Vertical Surveillance”. Advisor: Dr. Larry Kingsley

**Abigail Bartus**, “Baby and Me, without Hep C: An Early Intervention Education Campaign to Better the Outcomes of HCV in Mothers and Neonates”. Advisor: Dr. Derrick Matthews

**Daniel Lomauro**, “An Analysis of State Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs: Public Health Impact”. Advisor: Dr. Linda Frank

**Harley Roth**, “PrEP Awareness in Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) and Transgender Women Who Sought Services from the Allegheny County Health Department HIV/TD Clinic, 2016-2017”. Advisor: Dr. Mackey Friedman

**MPH-PEL Defense**

**Megan Beary**, “Validation of a Real-Time Polymerase Chain Reaction Assay for Sensitive Quantification of Francisella tularensis Strains”. Advisor: Dr. Douglas Reed

Back Row R-L: Renjian Xiao, Matthew Good, Harley Roth, Daniel Lomauro, Stephanie Snodgrass, Varangkorn Nakkeow, Diana DeLucia

Front Row R-L: Jennifer Burwinkel, Allison Feathers, Erica Berry, Emily Schmitz, JT Stoner, Jocelin Teachout, Lyndsay Avery, Parichat Duangkhao
**MS Defense**

Jonathan Mandell, “Staphylococcus Aureus Biofilms are Highly Tolerant to Traditional Antibiotics but Susceptible to Engineered Antimicrobial Peptide WLB02”. Advisor: Dr. Ken Urish

Jenna Malinauskas, “The Influence of Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms and Epigenetics on HIV Disease Progression”. Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Martinson

Sajen Solberg, “Caspase-1 Mediated Pro-inflammatory Cytokine Pathway in Highly Pathogenic H5N1 Avian Influenza Infection in the Non-Human Primate Model”. Advisor: Dr. Simon Barratt-Boyes

**MPH-MIC Defense**

Li Lin, “Improving the Duration of Airborne Isolation for Suspected Pulmonary Tuberculosis: Cost-Effectiveness Analysis”. Advisor: Dr. Mohamed Yassin

Kelsey Messerschmidt, “An Analysis of Staffing Efficiency of Mass-Dispensing Modalities in Response to Infectious Disease Public Health Emergencies”. Advisor: Dr. Mackey Friedman

**MPH-PEL Defense**

Andrew Ayers, “Schistosomiasis and the Control and Prevention of a Debilitating Disease: A Literature Review”. Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Martinson

Nicole Rafalko, “Diagnostic Methods Used for Pediatric TB in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Literature Review”. Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Martinson

Cory Hayes, “Conducting a Retrospective Cohort to Evaluate the Accuracy of a Real-Time Multiple Logistic Regression Tool for Predicting the Likelihood of Patient Readmission”. Advisor: Dr. Mohamed Yassin

Patrick Kapfhammer, “Chasing the Titer: A Study on the Spread and Control of the Asian Tiger Mosquito, Aedes Albopictus”. Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Martinson

**MPH-PCMI Defense**

Ingrid Godfrey, “Sexual Health for Youth in Rural Areas: A Comparison of the Republic of Moldova and Pennsylvania”. Advisor: Dr. Linda Frank
Baby News . . .

Mariah Cole, IDM MS 2017 graduate, and Noah Salama, IDM graduate 2017 welcomed a baby girl, Lilah on August 22, 2018.

Congratulations to the Cole & Salama Families!

Lauren Lepone Brodd, IDM PhD 2012 graduate, and husband Matt Brodd, welcomed a baby boy, Mason Kenneth Brodd on October 17, 2018.

Congratulations to the Lepone & Brodd Families!
Visit the IDM website at:
http://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/idm