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HST.161 Molecular Biology and Genetics in Modern Medicine
Fall 2007

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Guidelines for the HST.161 Clinical Project and Paper

An important component of HST.160 is the clinical project and paper. To carry out this project we will introduce you to a clinician-researcher who will serve as your mentor and contact point. The specific goal of this project is to provide you with a first hand view of the issues and experiences which occur as modern molecular biology meets the world of individual experience from the perspective of the patient and the family. You will be expected to meet with patients and family members either in the context of the clinician's activities or individually through contacts made for you by the clinician. However, you are expected to go beyond simply following the clinician in his or her patient contact. Your paper should synthesize the research and clinical implications of the genetics and molecular biology underpinning the disease.

Choosing a topic/mentor

We will circulate a list of clinicians who have agreed to act as mentors for your final project. The list will contain their names, institutional affiliations and a brief description of their field (and thus, the topic for your paper). Please choose a ranked list of *at least* 10 mentors and email or hand them to Eric, the TA, by **September 21**.

We will then email your assigned mentor or a suggested alternative mentor if necessary. If there is a topic of particular interest to you that is not listed, please email a course director about this topic. If it is possible, we will attempt to identify a clinical mentor for you for this topic. Please understand that not everyone can have their first choice, and any project will only be as interesting as you make it. Once you have been assigned a topic, you will be responsible for contacting your clinical mentor and arranging a meeting

All of the clinical mentors asked to participate in this portion of the course are Harvard Medical School faculty members who have agreed to serve in this capacity. **Contact your mentor as soon as possible** to arrange a time to meet. Ideally, you will meet with him/her/them before your clinic visit(s) to get a sense of what they do, what type of patients they see, what is the status of the field etc. It is in your best interest to read up on the field at least a little bit before you meet with your mentor(s) to show you are interested in what you are about to learn and so you can ask intelligent questions.

You should plan to attend clinic/see patients with your mentor one to three times, depending on their schedules. Most do not see patients all day, every day, so you will have to work around their schedules to determine when you might be able to see patients with them. **Dress appropriately** when meeting your clinical mentor and seeing patients. **Treat patients courteously** and remember you must **respect patient confidentiality at all times**.

Your mentor can help you choose a specific topic for your final paper and steer you toward appropriate resources, but, remember, this is your paper. Don't expect them to

write it for you. You can ask them to review and critique your work if they have time. Give them plenty of advance notice if you plan to do this.

Final Paper

You will write a final paper addressing your clinical experience with your mentor and focusing on the medical field you studied. You should present background on the disease/condition you were studying, and the current state of research into the molecular biology and genetics of your chosen topic. Directions for future research, unanswered questions about the disease/condition, and current or future therapy options would all be appropriate topics to address. The content of this paper should be original: a compilation of downloaded texts is not acceptable nor will it help you absorb the material. Papers should be ~10-12 double spaced pages (~3000-3600 words), excluding references. All cited work must be appropriately referenced! Figures, tables, etc. are helpful but not necessary.

We will provide a few examples of well written papers from previous years to give you an idea of what we expect from you, however these previous papers are not expected to be used as a template – merely an example.

Your final paper is due as an email attachment to your faculty section leader or TA on **December 4th**. For editorial assistance, students may send their papers to Dr. Susanne Klingenstein via email (sklingenstein@rcn.com) about 2 weeks in advance of the due date. Susanne will review and return the papers to the students. The MD students may use the HST.160 paper to fulfill one unit of their Communication Requirement for the fall semester; if they don't use the HST.160 paper, they must use another, such as the Path autopsy paper. The PhD students do not have this requirement, but Susanne will look at their papers as well.

Final Discussion Sections

Students will each have ~ 20 minutes to present a summary of their papers to the group during the class session on either Tuesday, **December 11th** or Friday, **December 14th**. Attendance for **presentation of your paper is mandatory**. A short PowerPoint would be fine but not necessary. Be prepared to answer questions from the group.