



BIOLOGY CURRENTS

FROM THE DESK OF THE CHAIR

Greetings Fellow Alumni!

Yes, I graduated from Queens College (September '63) with a major in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. Immediately afterward, I entered the Ph.D. program in Biological Sciences at Columbia University and completed my Ph.D. degree in 1969. I did postdoctoral research at Columbia University with Dr. Cyrus Levinthal and then at Albert Einstein College of Medicine with Dr. Julius Marmur. In September 1972, I joined the faculty at the Queens College Biology Department and am now a tenured full Professor. On January 29, 2001 I was elected Chair of Biology to complete the term of Dr. Harold Magazine, who has taken a leave of absence. It is truly a pleasure to have the opportunity to serve the Department where I initiated my career.

One of my first decisions as Chair was to ask Dr. Uldis Roze to renew publication of *Biology Currents*, the alumni newsletter he began writing while Chair of Biology (1996-99). This is a special double issue for the 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 academic years. A great deal has happened, both in the Biology Department and at Queens College. *Biology Currents* is our way of keeping you informed of these events. We appreciate any comments or suggestions.

My years as a student in the Queens College Biology Department set me on a path to a career as a molecular geneticist that has been immeasurably fulfilling, and I have many fond recollections of this time. I remember a particular fossilized bone weighing about 20 pounds with crumbling ends that Dr. Max Hecht included on a Comparative Anatomy practical exam. I was so excited when I correctly identified it as a humerus from a young animal (the crumbs were what remained of the epiphyses). And how many of you remember the sound of sharp pencils tapping on the desktops during Embryology lab as Dr. Giles McIntyre demanded

“Stipple! Do not shade!”? My lifelong love of genetics was kindled by a course titled “Biochemical Genetics” taught by Dr. Donald E. Lancefield. Genetics has come a long way since the days of Beadle and Tatum’s “one gene, one enzyme” hypothesis, and I have had the privilege of evolving intellectually along with the field.

During my post-doctoral studies, I began working on the genetics of baker’s yeast, a eukaryotic microorganism that has developed into one of the most important model genetic organisms. I am still actively working in this field, training both graduate and undergraduate students, and publishing regularly. The seeds of this career were sown during my undergraduate years at Queens College, where I was permanently infused with the excitement of scientific investigation. During my tenure as Chair of Biology I hope to nourish and enhance this sense of excitement in the undergraduate experience by strengthening and expanding both our course offerings and the research opportunities for our students. To this end, I will work to add several new faculty members to the Biology Department who will be active teachers and scholars.

Hiring new faculty in the sciences is not as straightforward as it is in the English or History Department. The College must provide laboratory facilities and the opportunity to establish an independent research program. This can be difficult given the tight budgets that Queens College and CUNY have suffered under for the past few years. Nonetheless, it is essential to the life-blood of an academic organization, allowing us to offer a curriculum that keeps pace with the rapid advances in the life sciences that we read about every day in the newspapers. With luck, we will be able to report to you in next year’s *Biology Currents*, on the success of our current search.

Corinne A. Michels

BERNARD AND GLORIA SALICK CENTER FOR CELL AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY—A DREAM ENDED

In 1997 Dr. Bernard and Gloria Salick donated \$4.5 million to Queens College to establish an endowed chair for Dr. Luc Montagnier, one of the discoverers of HIV, the causative agent of AIDS. The donation was intended to act as seed money for the development of a Center for Cell and Molecular Biology at the College. The Salicks hoped that their generosity would enhance the educational experience for Queens College students while contributing to

the eradication of this devastating disease. Unfortunately these plans never came to fruition.

While approximately \$1 million was used to equip temporary quarters for the Center in a well-renovated space in Remsen, sufficient additional funding for the construction of a building to house the research functions of the Center was never raised. Dr. Montagnier did not obtain research grants and an active Queens College-based research effort did not materialize. The anticipated addition of new Biology Department faculty with research affiliations in the Center never occurred, and Center activities remained

quite separate from Biology Department academic and research functions. Their dreams dashed, Dr. and Mrs. Salick demanded the return of their money and on March 16, 2001, Interim President Russell Hotzler approved the release of \$3 million from the Queens College Foundation.

Although we might have benefited greatly from the success of the Center, the regrettable end of this project has little negative impact on the future of our Department. While plans have not been finalized, we hope to put the research facilities in the former Center to good academic use. Additionally, a \$291,000 endowment established with the interest from the original donation will be available for scholarships for students in the biomedical sciences. For this, we thank the Salicks.

Corinne A. Michels

FACULTY

Leslie Marcus was cited by NSF Director Rita Colwell for his ground-breaking work with Eric Delson on primate morphometrics. These researchers are attempting to “define the dimensions of a primate’s skull with three-dimensional coordinates, or landmarks. As they trace the differences between subspecies, species, and genera, they hope to uncover pathways of primate evolution, perhaps shedding light on our origins.” The research is supported by a large NSF grant to the American Museum of Natural History, where both faculty members are research associates. Colwell delivered her comments at a February 2000 plenary lecture at the AAAS meeting.

Cathy Savage-Dunn was a recipient of the Feliks Gross Endowment Award from the Academy for Humanities and Sciences at the CUNY Graduate Center. The award is designed to honor emerging scholars for their research and scholarly accomplishments. Savage-Dunn is one of only two recipients in the CUNY system. Supported by a grant from the American Cancer Society, she is studying developmental genetics in the nematode worm, *Caenorhabditis elegans*. This tiny animal, whose genome was recently sequenced, has become one of the most important model genetic systems in biology.

College-wide Faculty Awards

During the past two years, Biology faculty have garnered a disproportionate share of the college-wide awards for teaching, research, and service. Teaching awards went in 1999 to Peter Chabora and in 2000 to Jared Rifkin and Donald Abramson (Adjunct lecturer in ACE). The Presidential Research Award in 2000 went to Tim Short, who thanked the President for “pronouncing photomorphogenesis correctly.” And the 2000 Division of Natural Sciences Service Award went to David Alsop.

RETIREES

Sheldon Aaronson was highlighted by *Science* magazine in a book review of *The Cambridge World History of Food*, to which Aaronson has contributed a chapter discussing the use of seaweed as food. The reviewer applauds the novelty and detail of Aaronson’s treatment, which lists all the edible varieties of seaweeds, with their amino acids, trace elements, and vitamins. In 1999 Sheldon was elected a Fellow of the Ethnobotany Society.

Arthur Colwin called from Florida this January. Two years ago, he was still recovering from heart surgery. But the recovery went well, allowing him and Laura to spend the summer at their place in Woods Hole. Arthur and Laura are planning to be there again this summer. They send greetings to all their friends.

Andrew Greller is an active board member of the Metro Forest Council, an organization of environmental professionals that offers expertise on environmental matters of public interest. He has been documenting the escape of *Magnolia* species into the wild on Long Island, and believes the rising incidence of such escapes may be signaling a change in local climate.

ALUMNI

Susan Benoff ’71 returned to her *alma mater* on Oct. 11, 2000, to give a seminar on the topic of male contraception. Susan heads the Molecular Biology Laboratory of the Division of Human Reproduction at North Shore University Hospital, and is an Associate Professor of OB/GYN and Cell Biology at the NYU School of Medicine. She is also currently serving as president of Women in Andrology, and is a member of the Editorial Board of *Human Reproduction Update*. She has won 10 national and international awards, has published 44 papers, and has been granted one patent, with another application pending.

Colleen Cannon ’86 “MS in 1990 (Virginia Polytechnic Inst.), married in ’92, moved to Berlin ’93, returned to U.S. in ’97, finished Ph.D. in ’98 (Virginia Polytechnic Inst.—entomology) Whew! Through it all I still remember my time at QC fondly—and you, Dr. Roze. You taught me Bio 101!” Colleen’s email: colleen.cannon@usa.net.

Ellen Cho France ’98 writes of having survived her first year of graduate cell biology at Yale with distinction—she got honors in all of her courses. She has joined the lab of Peter Novack, who works on protein trafficking and secretion in yeast. Ellen has been sub-cloning a gene to construct a GFP-tagged protein. She notes that despite the long road traveled by hardworking researchers, an astonishing number of questions remain to be answered.

ALUMNI

Fred Gould '71, professor at North Carolina State University, was a member of the National Academy of Sciences panel on genetically engineered crops. The April 6, 2000 *New York Times* quotes Dr. Gould as saying some caution will be necessary in future safety assurances for biotech foods.

Steven M. Kreitzer '67 got an M.D. at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in 1971 and lives in Tampa, Florida.

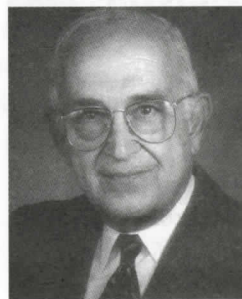
John J. Lee '55 is a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Biology, CCNY. He wrote in April '99 that he was in the final days of editing a 1,400-page book, *An Illustrated Guide to the Protozoa*. He is itching to get back to his own research on the symbiosis between giant protozoa and various algal groups. The work requires commuting between various tropical and semitropical paradises such as the Great Barrier Reef, Kudaka Jima, Eilat, the Florida Keys. It is tough work, but someone has to do it. At the National Center for Mariculture at Eilat, Israel, he is working to develop mariculture for the Negev Desert while at the same time preventing degradation of the environment. In 1999 Dr. Lee was elected Honorary Member of the Society of Protozoologists. He was also elected President of the International Society for Symbiosis and in October 1999 received the Joseph Cushman Award, the highest award of the Cushman Society for Foraminiferan Research.

Lynne Hochberg Pace '71 got an MD in 1975 from SUNY-Buffalo. She is currently Chief of Ophthalmology at the Buffalo VA Medical Center. She came to visit last summer with her oldest son, now a soph at SUNY-Binghamton, and saw Dr. Marien, who "actually remembered her," as well as Dr. Wasserman, Jesse Lawrence, and Regina Giancone. She says she could not believe the new buildings, but was glad that B Building and E Building (now Colwin Hall) were still there. She has 3 boys, aged 20, 16, and 14, who love NYC and like to see where she went to school. She says "the education I received at QC was top-notch. Many thanks to all the profs." Her email: lpace@acsu.buffalo.edu

Angelica M. Penalver '97 has accepted a position as a clinical research associate at Quintiles, Inc. She is working with various pharmaceutical companies, and will pursue a master's degree in clinical epidemiology. E-mail: apenalver@qnew.quintiles.com

QC HONORARY DEGREES FOR KAPIKIAN, WETHERS

In June 1999 Queens College honored two of its Biology alumni with honorary degrees. **Albert Kapikian '52** is the



Albert Kapikian

son of Armenian immigrants who survived the massacres of 1915. While at Queens College, he became a standout pitcher on the baseball team and cherishes a record of 11 consecutive wins. He graduated *cum laude* and entered Cornell University Medical School, receiving his M.D. in 1956. Kapikian has spent the bulk of his professional life at the National Institutes of Health, where in 1967 he was appointed head of the Epidemiology section of the Laboratory of Infectious Diseases of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease. In 1973 he identified the virus that causes hepatitis A. In the same year, he began a decades-long study of human rotavirus, which is the single most important cause of severe diarrhea in infants and young children worldwide, claiming over 870,000 lives annually in developing countries. This work led to the development of a rotavirus vaccine, licensed by the FDA in 1998. Kapikian has been receiving accolades and awards for over thirty years; in 1998 he was co-recipient of the Children's Vaccine Initiative Pasteur Award for his role in the development of the rotavirus vaccine, which has been described as "a gift package to the world."

Doris L. Wethers '48 graduated Queens College *magna cum laude*, following in the footsteps of her sister Agnes, who had graduated two years earlier. Doris Wethers was one of the first African-American women to graduate from Yale Medical School in 1952. Her medical career has been largely focused on



Doris L. Wethers

the health of children. She established the sickle cell program at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital, where she did clinical research and treatment of this disease, particularly as it affects children and adolescents. She is currently a Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and a member of the American Pediatric Society, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and a variety of other medical societies. In 1968 she was elected to membership in the Citizens Committee for Children of New York, a prominent child advocacy group in New York State. Wethers has been honored by the Charles Drew Premedical Society, the Council of Churches, the Public Health Association, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and others for her steady vision and long-term commitment to the children of New York. She continues submitting articles for publication, and says she now has time to travel and enjoy the myriad treasures of New York City.

BIOARCHEOLOGY: ALFRED F. HUETTNER

Queens College, established in 1937, is now generating its own historical artifacts. One such artifact, a box with hinged top and metal corners, came to light in 1986 when biology labs in B Building were packed up and moved to the newly completed Science Building. The container, the size of a lunchbox, was jammed full with 3.25 x 4 inch glass photo slides. Reproduced on the slides were histological sections of *Drosophila* embryos and views of the QC



Prof. Huettner, center, and students, Warren Linhart and Arthur Landrock

campus circa 1940. Who had taken the photos? His identity was quickly deduced. One of the scenes was labeled "Dr. Huettner's house at Woods Hole." Another slide shows Alfred Huettner in his lab in B Building, holding a model of a *Drosophila* embryo.

Drosophila was the research interest of Alfred F. Huettner, professor of Biology at Queens College from 1938 to 1952, and chair of the Department from 1945 until his retirement in 1953. He died in 1955. The room in B-108 had been his lab. Born in Germany in 1882, Huettner came to the U.S. in 1904. Like the majority of immigrants of this time, he worked very hard to support himself. One of his early jobs was that of deck-hand on a merchant vessel.

He earned a B.A. degree from the University of South Dakota and entered the Columbia University Ph.D. program in 1916, where he worked under E. B. Wilson, one of the founders of modern cell biology. Huettner's dissertation focused on the origin of germ cells in *Drosophila melanogaster*. This work had important implications for genetics, where *Drosophila* was becoming the model organism of choice. Huettner stayed on at Columbia as as-



Queens College circa 1940: A Building is on the left, F Building is in the center, and Jefferson Hall is to the right.

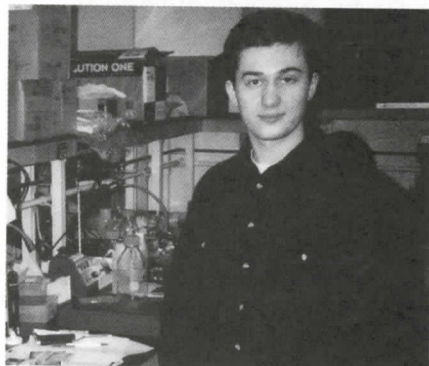
sistant professor, then moved to NYU where he rose to full professor. In 1938 Huettner joined the Queens College faculty. He took an active interest in his students, many of whom had to work to support themselves, just as Huettner had done earlier.

One of Huettner's first students was Seymour Fogel, who in 1941 traveled to an undergraduate science convention in Rochester to present a paper on plant physiology. Fogel had a distinguished career at Brooklyn College and CUNY, then became the chair of Genetics at the University of California at Berkeley. His estate endowed the Fogel Library and Fogel Fund in the QC Biology Department.

At Queens, Huettner taught vertebrate zoology and vertebrate embryology, while chairing the pre-medical and pre-dental committee during all his years at the College. He also continued his cytological studies on the chromosomes and embryology of the fruit fly, with the collaboration of his students. Huettner's last major publication was *Fundamentals of Comparative Embryology of the Vertebrates*, published with Macmillan in 1941, revised in 1949.

Huettner maintained a summer home and lab at Woods Hole, MA, where a world-famous embryology program had been established, and where Arthur and Laura Colwin of the QC Biology Department did much of their work. Huettner also maintained a garden at his house in Douglaston. In keeping with his embryological interests, he succeeded in grafting seven kinds of fruit on one fruit tree. And his privet hedge, to the amazement of neighbors, bloomed with grafted lilac blossoms.

PALTIEL WINS GOLDWATER



Michael Paltiel

Michael Paltiel left his native Tajikistan in 1992 at age 14. As a member of the Jewish minority, he and his family were caught up in the growing religious intolerance that was soon to erupt into a civil war. His father, a well-established electrical engineer, lost his job. The family received threatening phone calls. There was serious discrimination in school. Ultimately, his parents sold their house for next to nothing and moved the family west. His father is currently a security guard

and his mother, a former piano teacher at a college in Tajikistan, works as a home care attendant.

But for Michael, the horizons have become incomparably brighter than those he left behind. In spring 1999 he received notification that he had won one of the very prestigious national Goldwater scholarships, the second such award won by a QC Biology major in two years. Michael's credentials are formidable. He has a near-perfect 3.992 GPA. (The offending mark

BIOLOGY ALUMNI FUND

Between January 1999 and December 2000, 125 alumni contributed a total of \$14,826.17 to their home department. Alumni gifts fill an important niche in the Department's function. They are used to support student and faculty research, student travel to scientific conferences, departmental enhancement, and course development. We are deeply grateful for these demonstrations of remembrance and support.

List of Donors, 1999 and 2000

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Phyllis A. Wright '96

was an A- in political science!) He is doing molecular genetics research on *Caenorhabditis elegans* in the laboratory of Dr. Cathy Savage-Dunn, and has attended two scientific meetings, where he enjoyed interacting with other researchers and sharing ideas. He also likes the atmosphere in his home lab—Dr. Savage-Dunn gives her students considerable freedom to define their own approaches to a problem.

Michael's long-range plan is to do clinical research. His attempt to introduce a portion of the Huntington's chorea gene into *C. elegans* is a foretaste of the kind of work he would like to do. How have his goals changed since leaving Tajikistan? He laughs quietly. Had he survived, he would have probably become a photographer, the profession his father took up after losing his job as electrical engineer. Science in the former USSR started early—students took physics, chemistry, and biology at

the junior high school level. He remembers his grade-school biology as focused on botany, and never rising to the level of being intellectually challenging. At Queens College, Dr. Chabora's introductory biology course brought new discoveries routinely into the classroom, and biology became an intellectual adventure.

Michael's family celebrated his Goldwater award—they all went out for dinner. It seems probable that there will be more celebrations in the future as Michael has also been notified he is a winner of the College's Kenneth Kupferberg Award.

Michael is currently a first-year student at Johns Hopkins Medical School. His graduation honors included Biology high honors, the Lancefield Prize, the Feigelson Award, election to *Phi Beta Kappa*, the Wilbur E. Gilman Scholarship, and a Jonas Salk Scholarship.

Biology Graduates 1999

Abeynayake, Iresha—Biology high honors; Darwin Prize
 Alli, Paul—Biology honors; QC scholar
 Ayerov, Alex—Biology honors
 Bartosh, Alexander
 Bedi, Ruhi
 Beharry, Annette—Biology high honors; Darwin Prize; QC Scholar
 Chacko, Merlin
 Duffy, Erica
 Faiz, Mohammad—CUNY MA program
 Gomez, Lucy
 Hendricks, Tricia
 Ilyabayev, Abo—attending NYU Dental School
 Ing, Jeannie
 Iqbal, Gohar—Biology honors
 James, Patricia
 Kaminetzky, David—Biology high honors; Martin Dahlman Scholarship; Honorary mention Salk Scholarship; attending Albert Einstein Medical School
 Kaur, Balwant
 Khan, Roshan—Biology honors
 Kurian, Anju—Biology honors; attending SUNY-Syracuse College of Medicine
 Lam, Diane—Biology high honors; Lancefield Prize attending SUNY-Brooklyn Medical School
 Leon-Soares, Diane—Biology high honors
 Marrone, Vanessa
 Matta, Ritu
 Matteo, Jon—Biology honors
 Mohammed, Shameel—in Ph.D. program in physical therapy, U. South Carolina
 Moinamini, Shahriar
 Noble, Christine—Biology high honors; Feigelson Award; *Phi Beta Kappa*; Paul Klapper Scholarship; attending Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons
 Piazza, Joseph
 Rizzo, Joann—Biology honors
 Roca, Francisco
 Salamatbad, Michael—in M.A. program in Biology, Queens

College
 Santiago, Juan
 Schachter, Esther—Biology honors
 Sciano, Marc
 Shilo, Sarit—Biology high honors; *Phi Beta Kappa*; QC Women's Club Award
 Tekverk, Lawrence—Biology honors
 Tokarz, Rafal—Biology honors; Colwin Prize. In Ph.D. program at SUNY-Stony Brook
 Villegas, Maria
 Vincent, Daniel—High school science teaching
 Warner, Francene—attending SUNY-Brooklyn Medical School
 Yeung, Adrian—Biology honors; attending SUNY-Stony Brook School of Dentistry
 Yousefzadeh, Madeline

Biology Graduates 2000

Aballe, Antoinette
 Amorocho, Ricardo
 Andino, Julie
 Aulov, Roman
 Badalov, Isak
 Bazan, Giuseppina
 Campbell, Peter
 Cangemi, Joseph
 Cardona, Lina—Biology honors
 Cheema, Saima—Biology honors; Colwin Prize; attending CUNY Graduate School
 Chu, Shunman
 Chustek, Michael—Biology honors; attending SUNY-Brooklyn College of Medicine
 Desir, Woodley—accepted NYU College of Dentistry, New Jersey Dental School
 Elishakashvili, Diana—Biology high honors; Darwin Prize; *Phi Beta Kappa*; Martin Dahlman Memorial Award; attending St. George's Univ. School of Medicine
 George, Marie—Biology high honors; Lancefield Prize; CUNY Graduate School
 Gonzalez, Carla
 Gonzalez, Edimarlyn—Biology honors

Gopi, Gandhi—Biology honors
 Gyles, Richard—attending Columbia University School of Dental and Oral Surgery
 Jeanpierre, Jeanbaptiste—attending Biology MA program at QC
 Kooram, Vidya
 Lake, Simone
 Lisker, Diane—Biology honors
 Lycheva, Alisa
 Loreto, Eugene
 Mahadomrongkul, Veeravan—Biology honors; Colwin Prize
 Mishailov, Aleksey—Biology high honors; *Phi Beta Kappa*; Paul Klapper Scholarship; attending Mt. Sinai School of Medicine
 Mohammed, Jamal—Biology honors
 Mushiyevev, Savi—Biology high honors; *Phi Beta Kappa*; attending SUNY-Brooklyn College of Medicine
 Nazma, Usman—Biology honors
 Osanitch, Laura—M.A. Program in Biology, Queens College
 Paltiel, Michael—Biology high honors; Lancefield Prize; Feigelson Award; *Phi Beta Kappa*; Wilbur E. Gilman Scholarship; Jonas Salk Scholarship; attending Johns Hopkins Univ. School of Medicine
 Perlaza, John
 Ron, Eli—Ph.D. program in Biochemistry, SUNY-Stony Brook
 Rothschild, Sharon
 Saeed, Memoona
 Saleh, Mohammad
 Serelko, Renata—Biology honors
 Seudath, Oral—in M.A. program in Biology at Queens College
 Singh, Ginny—Biology honors
 Steinberg, David
 Tsimounis, Costas
 Tsohis, Georgia
 Zapata, Heidi—Biology honors; Colwin Prize; *Phi Beta Kappa*; QC Women's Club Award; accepted at 3 medical schools

BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT PUBLICATIONS, 1999

- Cohen, S.S., C. Li, Y. Cao, A.B. Pardee, E.M. Shevach, and D.I. Cohen 1999. Pronounced acute immunosuppression in vivo mediated by HIV Tat challenge. *Proc. Nat. Acad. Sci. USA* 19: 10842-10847.
- Bookstein, F., K. Schafer, H. Prossinger, H. Seidler, M. Fieder, C. Stringer, G.W. Weber, J.L. Arsuaga, D.E. Slice, F.J. Rohlf, W. Recheis, A.L. Mariam, and L.F. Marcus 1999. Comparing frontal cranial profiles in archaic and modern *Homo* by morphometric analysis. *Anatomical record* 257: 217-224.
- Hu, Z., A.W. Gibson, J.H. Kim, B. Wojciechowicz, B. Zhang and C.A. Michels 1999. Functional domain analysis of the *Saccharomyces MAL*-activator. *Curr. Genet.* 36: 1-12.
- Daudel, R. and L. Montagnier 1999. Attempts to engineer a subunit vaccine against AIDS. *Comptes Rendus de L'Academie des Sciences, Serie II Fascicule C—Chimie.* 2: 471-476.
- Gougeon, M.I. and L. Montagnier 1999. Programmed cell death as a mechanism of CD4 and CD8 T cell deletion in AIDS: Molecular control and effect of highly active anti-retroviral therapy. *Ann. NY Acad. Sci.* 887: 199-212.
- Moureau, C., M. Moynier, V. Kavsan, L. Montagnier, and E. Bahraoui. Specificity of anti-Nef antibodies produced in mice immunized with DNA encoding the HIV-1 nef gene product. *Vaccine* 18: 333-341.
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