

CIMIT-Russia Avian Flu Team Honored: Edward M. Kennedy Award for Healthcare Innovation

Boston, November 3, 2005: At the CIMIT Annual Briefing held this week, John A. Parrish, MD, Director, announced the recipients of the Edward M. Kennedy Award for Healthcare Innovation. Senator Kennedy spoke to the audience of 350 via a taped message to congratulate the team and CIMIT for its work. The award went to the CIMIT Russia team that helped create an avian flu surveillance program. The team was lead by Michael V. Callahan, MD, CIMIT Biodefense Program Leader, Massachusetts General Hospital, and as well as Jason Rao PhD, BioIndustry Initiative (BII) Director, Department of State.

Jeffrey A. Gelfand, MD, Director of CIMIT International, noted: “Dr. Callahan’s team with scientists at the Vector Viral Research Institute in Siberia -- by detecting avian flu in Siberian wildfowl -- sounded the alarm that added to worldwide measures for control. He added that one of the goals of the BII it to counter the threat of bioterrorism and work with Soviet biological and chemical weapons scientists to develop, test, and produce new vaccines and drug therapies. He said,

Dr. Callahan added: “In addition to identifying the H5N1 avian flu virus in birds that migrate along these Siberian flyways we are also looking for analogs, non-pathogenic cousins of the virus that might serve as a vaccine candidate. Birds produce their own antibodies and indicators of previous exposure, an early warning radar for newly emerging strains of influenza.”

Team members honored:

Other CIMIT team members honored in addition to Dr. Callahan and Dr. Rao included Jeffrey Gelfand, MD, Dan Blumenthal, and Irene Lerman.

CIMIT Kennedy Award for Healthcare Innovation

The Edward M. Kennedy Award for Healthcare Innovation was first given in 2002. This award was named for Senator Kennedy due to his constant support of innovation in health care, including his interest in and tremendous support of CIMIT. Senator Kennedy has consistently demonstrated his passion and commitment to innovation and medical research that will change the course of health care in America and beyond. Other than physician research awards, this is the only award that CIMIT gives to recognize an outstanding team whose work in the previous year embodies the CIMIT mission of innovative collaboration. Previous recipients of the Kennedy Award have been the Optical Imaging team led by Drs. Brett Bouma and Gary Tearney in 2004; the CIMIT Simulation team led by Steven Dawson, MD, in 2003; and Operating Room of the Future team in 2002, led by David Rattner, MD.

CIMIT: Bringing together Science and Technology

Since its inception, CIMIT has been bringing together clinicians from “problem-rich environments” with a desire to improve patient care with technologists from “solution-rich environments” who have the expertise to design novel devices. According to CIMIT Director John A. Parrish, MD, “As a clinically-centered consortium we draw upon the strengths of clinicians, inventors, engineers, industry leaders, scientists, and the military. It is an idea that works. And because of CIMIT we have been rapidly accelerating investigator ideas to address complex patient care problems.”

For further information:

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