

# Smilow Research Center Opens, Focusing on Translational Medicine



*The Smilow Research Center is the largest and most dramatic addition to midtown Manhattan's eastern skyline in more than half a century.*

## Event marked by two-day celebration

ONE JOURNEY JUST GOT LONGER at NYU Medical Center, and another just got shorter. For the first time, there is a single, nearly straight path from the main entrance on First Avenue to the edge of the campus that borders the FDR Drive. Visitors can now walk from the entrance of the Skirball Institute down Alumni Hall, through the Medical Sciences Building, into a new courtyard called Alumni Plaza. There they stand before the 13-story Joan and Joel Smilow Research Center, NYU's new home for translational medicine, which seeks to shorten the journey from the laboratory bench to the patient's bedside.

NYU celebrated the opening of the building in May with a two-day ceremony attended by hundreds of faculty, staff, and visitors. The first day featured a symposium with presentations by six distinguished guest scientists, including two Nobel Laureates.

It was a perfect introduction to the Smilow Research Center, which is designed to promote the translation of basic research into better ways of diagnosing, treating, and preventing disease. The 230,000-square-foot facility — the largest and most dramatic addition to midtown Manhattan's eastern skyline in half a century and the newest major structure on campus in more than a decade — will ultimately house some 40 multidisciplinary research teams, a mix of current investigators and new recruits. These teams will be dedicated to such fields as cancer, cardiovascular biology, neuroscience, dermatology, genetics, and infectious diseases.

"This is a truly historic moment for NYU Medical Center ... the culmination of an eight-year quest to help shape the future of biomedical science," declared Dean and CEO Robert M. Glickman, M.D., at the dedication ceremony held on the second day. "This research center will help cement our reputation as one of America's preeminent medical research institutions."

"With the Smilow Research Center, for the first time we will have enough money and enough space to try an organized approach to translational research and to assemble the teams we need to go after a problem in every direction," said Rodolfo Llinás, M.D., Ph.D., Chairman of the Department



*Before the Dedication Symposium, distinguished speakers and presenters gathered. From left to right: (seated) Rodolfo R. Llinás, M.D., Ph.D., Chairman, Physiology and Neuroscience; (front row) David B. Roth, M.D., Ph.D., Chairman, Pathology; David D. Sabatini, Doc. en Med., Ph.D., Chairman, Cell Biology; Dafna Bar-Sagi, Ph.D., Chairwoman, Biochemistry; Nobel Laureate David Baltimore, Ph.D., President, California Institute of Technology; Dean Robert M. Glickman, M.D.; Steven J. Burakoff, M.D., Director, Skirball Institute of Biomolecular Medicine and NYU Cancer Institute; (back row) Glenn I. Fishman, M.D., Director, Leon H. Charney Division of Cardiology; Richard P. Lifton, M.D., Ph.D., Sterling Professor of Genetics, Internal Medicine, and Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry, Yale; Eric S. Lander, Ph.D., Director, Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard; Eugene Braunwald, M.D. (52), Distinguished Hersey Professor of Medicine, Harvard; Nobel Laureate Paul Greengard, Ph.D., Head, Laboratory of Molecular and Cellular Neuroscience, The Rockefeller University; Ira Mellman, Ph.D., Chairman, Cell Biology, Yale; Hidde L. Ploegh, Ph.D., Professor of Biology, MIT; Trustee and Benefactor Joel E. Smilow; Claudio Basilio, M.D., Chairman, Microbiology.*

of Physiology and Neuroscience and the Thomas and Suzanne Murphy Professor of Neuroscience.

Guest speaker Ira Mellman, Ph.D., Chairman of the Department of Cell Biology at Yale University School of Medicine, noted: “The advent of a new building as important as the Smilow Research Center is absolutely a seminal event in the history of NYU School of Medicine, as it would be at any other medical school.”

An elegant marriage of form and function, the Smilow Research Center incorporates many design elements that are conducive to formal and informal interactions, including large open laboratories, a multiplicity of meeting rooms, a 140-seat lecture hall, a spiral staircase linking the top three floors (devoted to cancer research), a ground-floor café, and a courtyard.

The building was a challenge to engineering ingenuity and design efficiency. To capitalize on every available square foot of space in this hidden corner of the campus, once occupied by a bike shed and basketball court (both relocated), its footprint took the shape of an irregular trapezoid. The

Smilow Research Center is built on landfill that was part of the East River only a century ago. Before its foundation could be laid, 60 million gallons of water had to be pumped out of the excavation site. To keep the waters from flowing back in, engineers devised a system of 394 secant piles, or overlapping concrete cylinders—the first of its kind ever used in New York City. To reduce heat and glare, the building’s windows are made of highly reflective patterned glass and shaded by aluminum sunscreens. The windows are so soundproof that even helicopters lifting off and landing nearby are all but silent.

At the dedication ceremony, several people were honored for their contributions to the new facility, most notably Trustee Joel Smilow, whose generosity made the building possible. Mr. Smilow said that he hopes to attend a future symposium “composed of scientists involved in translational medicine, talking about how the discoveries at this institution have led to improving patient care and promoting health.” ●

— Gary Goldenberg