

Graduate Alumni Profile: Dr. Raymond E. Menard

As a post-doctorate student at the University of Chicago, Dr. Raymond E. Menard has his friends to help him unwind.

"We have gotten together a few times to play guitar since I moved to Chicago. It's a great way to relax and it's a lot of fun to make good music with my buddies," he said.

At the School of Medicine, Dr. Menard had similar ways to deal with stress. In the pharmacology department, he could also count on his friends to help him relax. They were always good for a cup of coffee or a good talk when things got too demanding. Dr. Menard found an environment that not only provided the resources necessary for a challenging and competitive career in biomedical research, but also offered supportive faculty and friendly classmates.

When choosing a program, Dr. Menard sought a school that had a reputation for being one of the best biomedical research facilities in the country.

"I felt that I would have the opportunity to do some interesting and rewarding research at Wayne," he said, "and that certainly turned out to be true."

Dr. Menard worked closely with his advisor Dr. Raymond Mattingly and credits him with much of his own success.

Dr. Mattingly was recently awarded the Ralph C. Wilson, Sr. and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Medical Research Foundation, Research Grant for Discovery in the Biomedical Sciences and has been designated a "Wilson Scholar" based partly on work established in Dr. Menard's

pharmacology dissertation in 2003.

"Dr. Mattingly was a great advisor and is a very knowledgeable scientist," he said. "Working in his lab provided me with excellent guidance and was a great experience."

Dr. Menard's dissertation dealt with the study of p21 activated kinase 1 (PAK1) and its potential role in breast cancer. He showed that when this protein is activated it can assist cells in continuing to divide, even in environments that would normally cause death.

"In other words, active PAK1 may lead to tumor formation. So from a therapeutic stand point, if you inhibit PAK1 you may reduce the likelihood of tumor formation," he explained. "So, in a nutshell, if active PAK1 helps cells bypass the death pathway, it may therefore be key in breast cancer formation."

Dr. Menard's research has been published in two journals this past December and January, and he has also received a cancer biology training grant for the last two years of his research.

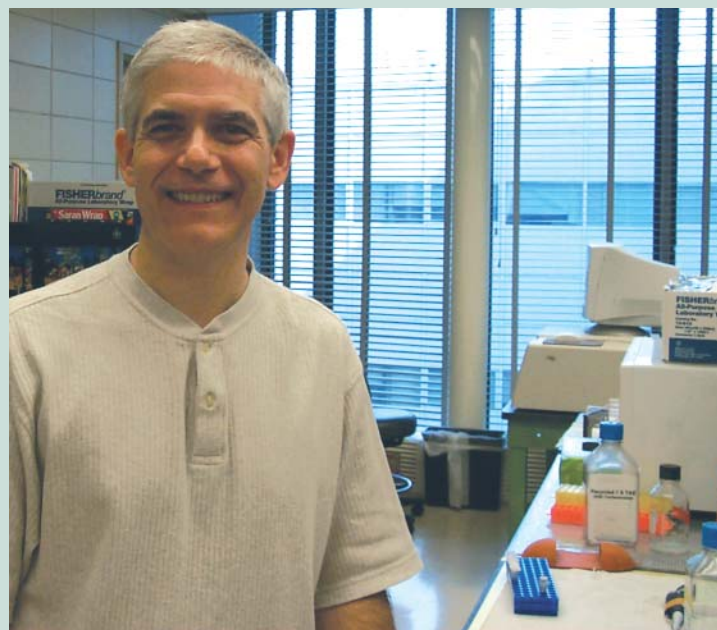
"PAK1 has been shown to be active in various human breast cancer cells line and therefore makes a good possible therapeutic target," he said. "The last part of my thesis was investigating the role of PAK1 in rescuing MCF10A human breast epithelial cells, from undergoing anoikis, which is induced cell death. Some of the work in these cells has led to Dr. Mattingly's work on mammary epithelial hyperplasia."

Dr. Menard said he found a place at the School of Medicine that led to great success for him as a researcher. As he worked on his doctorate, he also found time to help others through his involve-

ment with Graduate Research Day.

"I was on the committee for two years and thought it was a great way for students to showcase their work," he said.

Currently, Dr. Menard's work focuses on a protein that has been shown to be present at low levels in certain prostate cancers and how it might regulate the formation of cancer cells. ■



Dr. Menard in his laboratory

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