VA Palo Alto Doctor Recognized for Outstanding Professional Achievement

Congratulations to VAPAHCS investigator and Stanford Professor Dr. David Relman, who was elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences on Oct. 18. According to the announcement of the new members, "election to the IOM is considered one of the highest honors in the fields of health and medicine and recognizes individuals who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievement and commitment to service." As noted by Dr. Harvey Fineberg, President of the IOM, "each of them stands out as a professional whose research, knowledge, and skills have significantly advanced health and medicine, and their achievements are an inspiration."

A write up by Dr. Relman on the Stanford University Website says, "My primary research focus is the human indigenous microbiota (microbiome), and in particular, the nature and mechanisms of variation in patterns of microbial diversity within the human body as a function of time (microbial succession), space (biogeography within the host landscape), and in response to perturbation, e.g., antibiotics (community robustness and resilience). One of the goals of this work is to define the role of the human microbiome in health and disease. Our work includes the human oral cavity, gut, and female reproductive tract, as well as an analysis of microbial diversity in marine mammals. This research integrates theory and methods from ecology, population biology, environmental microbiology, genomics and clinical medicine.

During the past few decades, my research directions have also included pathogen discovery and the development of new strategies for identifying previously-unrecognized microbial agents of disease. This work has included the use of host gene expression response patterns to recognize and understand early stages of systemic infection. Currently, we are examining genomic patterns of host response in dengue fever and in cases of undiagnosed febrile illness, for diagnostic and prognostic purposes, as well as to understand better disease mechanism."