

A Week in the Life of Dr. Cato Laurencin

From Inspiring Young Students to Receiving an Award from the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, SFB Member Has another typical Week to Remember



It began with something rewarding and ended with a prestigious award. Oh, and don't forget the little things in between, like cutting-edge research on limb regeneration and strategic planning sessions to keep the world safe from infectious diseases like the Zika virus.

Cato Laurencin, M.D., Ph.D., director of the University of Connecticut's Institute for Regenerative Engineering and member of the US Society For Biomaterials, is one of the country's leading surgeon-scientists. He has made headlines for his support of stem cell therapies for tendon and ligament injuries backed by [Olympic athletes](#), to receiving the [National Medal of Technology and Innovation](#) from President Barack Obama.

But how does one become so accomplished? If you're someone like Laurencin, the answer is easy – hard work!

If you've ever wondered what a typical week in the life of an internationally renowned and award-winning researcher looks like, here's a behind the scenes peek at a whirlwind week Laurencin had last month.

Day one started in Palm Beach County, Florida, with Laurencin addressing more than 800 middle and high school students at the Inlet Grove Community High School. Laurencin headlined the [T. Leroy Jefferson Medical Society's Healthcare in Science Stars of Tomorrow Career Symposium](#), where he encouraged young students from urban areas to consider healthcare science as a career possibility.

"I really enjoyed sharing some principles for success and personal philosophies in terms of successfully developing people," Laurencin said.

Laurencin enjoyed giving scientifically-minded students some personal anecdotes regarding how he was able to find success as a student, and used lessons learned in school to propel himself to international standing as a renowned surgeon and researcher.

But once school let out, Laurencin immediately switched gears from local students to global problems.

As a fellow of the African Academy of Sciences, Laurencin was chosen as one of 15 people to attend the [Global Research Collaborative for Infectious Disease Preparedness](#) in Washington, D.C. The high-level discussions were led by the US Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, and focused on mapping out a global plan to deal with the Zika virus running rampant in South America and Latin America.

“Pooling resources and sharing knowledge about diagnostics and vaccine development are vital to combating the spread of pandemics”, Laurencin said, and he enjoyed the opportunity to be part of the discussion about helping stem the tide.

Following his planning session to defend against the Zika virus, Laurencin then headed to the nearby National Institutes of Health as the featured speaker at the [Wednesday Afternoon Lecture Series](#).

The title of his speech was “Bone Regenerative Engineering: A Convergence Approach,” and Laurencin detailed his many aspects of his regenerative work including the HEAL Project. HEAL (Hartford Engineering a Limb), is a challenge Laurencin is undertaking aimed at regenerating a human knee within seven years, and an entire limb in less than 15 years.

The Wednesday series is the highest profile lecture program at NIH, with each session including some of the biggest names in biomedical and behavioral research. Laurencin was asked to speak because the goal of the series is to keep NIH researchers abreast of the latest and most important research in the United States and beyond, according to the NIH website.

Next it was off to Johns Hopkins for the Postdoctoral Affairs Lecture Series, where Laurencin met with faculty and postdoctoral researchers in educational and training programs related to bone regeneration engineering.

“It was fantastic,” Laurencin said. “Just a very cool experience.”

And finally, Laurencin ended his week in New York City where he was honored for his work in improving China-U.S. Cooperation.

The award was bestowed upon Laurencin by the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, to note his work fostering US-China relations in the scientific community. Laurencin was recognized for his efforts as an elected member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

Laurencin is the first foreign member from the United States to be elected in the field of biomaterials and one of the youngest foreign members to be elected in its history, [according to UConn Today](#).

“Dr. Laurencin’s work in developing innovative biomaterials for musculoskeletal therapies has represented major shifts in thinking in medicine and engineering,” said Dr. Xingdong Zhang, former president of the Chinese Society for Biomaterials, president-elect of the International

Union of Societies for Biomaterials Science and Engineering, and an Academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering. “His work has had great impact in China, and throughout the world.”

From outreach to young people, developing strategies to combat global pandemics, lecturing at universities and research centers, and recognition for his research from international authorities, Dr. Laurencin’s typical week demonstrates a tremendous breadth of drive and commitment.