Stem Cell Trial Seeks to Advance Treatment of Spinal Cord Injuries

“Barrier-breaking research.”

That’s how Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine physician-scientist Richard G. Fessler, MD, PhD, professor in the Department of Neurological Surgery and neurosurgeon at Northwestern Memorial Hospital (NMH), describes his latest project: a national clinical research trial of a human embryonic stem-cell based therapy for participants with acute thoracic spinal cord injuries.

“This is the first clinical stem cell trial of its type in the world,” says Fessler. “We hypothesize that an injection of oligodendrocyte progenitor cells directly into spinal cord lesions is a rational way to attempt to arrest or reverse the structural damage in the spinal cord caused by severe trauma.”

This trial is the evolution of a previous safety study of human embryonic spinal cord transplantation that Fessler led in the late 90’s at the University of Florida. Since that time, the Geron Corporation – an industry partner that sponsors the current study – discovered ways to regenerate stem cell lines for use in treating human diseases.

Specifically, Geron demonstrated the stem cells’ ability to recoat damaged nerve cells that have lost their ability to conduct electrical impulses. These stem cells have also shown nerve-growth stimulating properties leading to restoration of function in acute spinal cord injury. After years of animal research, the FDA deemed the stem cell
therapy safe and effective for study in humans.

Given Fessler’s prior experience and Feinberg’s affiliation with the world-renowned Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC), Geron selected Northwestern as one of five sites across the country to host the study.

“Rehabilitation is a major component of our research. It’s absolutely critical following any operation, particularly spinal cord surgery,” says Fessler, emphasizing the role in the study of RIC experts like David Chen, MD, associate professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Feinberg and medical director of the RIC Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program.

He adds: “Our research involves the expertise of so many specialists, including those focused on rehabilitation, radiology, and infectious disease. Luckily, here at Northwestern, we have the ability to collaborate with anyone we need to.”

Fessler, the study’s lead national investigator, recently enrolled his first subject, which is only the second of 10 potential subjects nationally. Finding qualified candidates has proven difficult due to the trial’s highly extensive criteria for participation. Eligible subjects must have sustained injuries causing complete paralysis within a two week window, yet be completely healthy otherwise. In addition to other requirements, their spinal cord must be visible through an MRI and the contusion located between spinal segments T2 and T11.

The first Feinberg participant received an injection of cells at NMH in May and continues to undergo a progressive course of rehabilitation care and intervention at RIC. Phase I of the study follows all participants for 15 years to assess the safety and tolerability of human embryonic stem cell injection, as well as stem cells’ ability to improve neuromuscular control or sensation in the trunk or lower extremities.

“We predict limited benefits to patients in the first phase, since we are administering a low dose at a single injection site. Our subjects join the study to contribute to scientific knowledge and possibly return some function,” Fessler says. “Phase II will likely involve a larger dose of stem cells at a more impactful site, such as the neck.”

In addition to benefiting patients with spinal cord injuries, Fessler also sees positive implications for stem cell transplantation in patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) – a disease involving similar damage to the myelin sheath, the protective covering that surrounds nerve cells.

“The findings from this monumental study could have a life-changing impact on tens of thousands of people,” says Fessler.

For more information about the stem cell trial at Feinberg, contact Richard Fessler: rfessler@nmff.org or (312) 695-6200.

---

**Stem cells, continued from pg. 1**

---

**Seed Grant Program Announced for Feinberg**

Eric G. Neilson, MD, Lewis Landsberg Dean and Vice President for Medical Affairs of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, recently announced a new program that will provide seed funding up to $15,000 (up to $500 to $1,000 for a retreat, and up to $14,000 for application preparation) to initiate new multi-investigator grant applications involving Feinberg faculty. The funds are intended to support new applications, preferably to the National Institutes of Health. There is an expectation of casting a wide net, such that research projects ought to involve at least two faculty members from outside the home department of the principal investigator, which may include Evanston.

More information about the new funding program, including application forms, is available on the Feinberg Research Office web site.

Investigators should contact Rex Chisholm, Vice Dean for Scientific Affairs, with any questions and for approval.
University Police (UP) reported a 22 percent decrease in lab building crimes and a 36 percent decrease in theft and property damage in lab buildings for the first six months since implementing a comprehensive new security policy, compared to the same six months of the previous year.

Noted Dan McAleer, deputy chief, UP, “Crime statistics for Chicago campus buildings are normally substantially less than Evanston campus buildings. The security staff in place, the high rise nature of most Chicago buildings, the video cameras and the lack of undergraduates who are often less careful about protecting their personal property are all factors that contribute to these numbers.”

The number of total incidents in lab buildings dropped from 23 to 18 during the selected reporting period, while incidents of theft and property damage dropped from 22 to 14.

“Most crime reports we receive in Evanston or Chicago involve unattended property or property that is not secured,” said McAleer. “These are crimes of opportunity. Some perpetrators can come through the checkpoints and have a legitimate reason for coming through or being in a building – delivery personnel, contractors, visitors.”

McAleer stressed that UP’s number one priority continues to be crimes against persons. “We have not had any reported assaults, batteries, etc. within the medical school buildings [during this reporting period]. I believe all of the added security measures the medical school has taken contribute to a safer environment.”

However, UP continues to urge those on the Chicago campus to use caution outside and be aware of surroundings, particularly in parking garages. Despite the drop in lab building crime, an increased number of auto burglaries has recently been reported in campus parking lots.

In parking garage thefts, offenders target vehicles that have valuables displayed in the passenger compartments - most commonly GPS devices. Police have noted offenders looking into cars for valuables and smashing windows to remove anything in plain sight.

To avoid being the victim of an auto burglary, UP advises the community to keep cars secure at all times, and keep all valuables out of plain sight when leaving the vehicle. When walking inside of the parking lots, keep alert and aware of surroundings. Do not walk with headphones on.

Report suspicious activity to UP by calling 312-503-3456. University community members may also contact UP to request safety escorts on foot or with a bike patrol officer to on-campus locations. Squad car escorts are also available on the Chicago campus. Please note, there may be a waiting period for escorts as the result of concurrent police activities.

The parking lots feature increased security personnel on patrol in response to these issues, and officers are also making frequent patrols of these lots. UP has added patrol resources to the Chicago campus over the past several weeks in an effort to prevent such crimes. In addition, Chicago Police have increased patrols in the River North and downtown areas as well as at EL and Metra stations. Chicago Police officials have previously related that smartphones and other high-end devices are increasingly popular with would-be thieves.

A list of additional safety tips is available on the University Police web site.

Core Fact

Congratulations to the winners of the 2011 Feinberg Core Facility Pilot Grant competition.

- **Behavioral Phenotyping Core**: Jaime Garcia-Anoveros, Laura Herzing
- **Human ES and iPS Cell Facility**: Ramille Shah, Yong-Chao Ma
- **NUgene**: Cara Gottardi/Anna Lam, Peter Kopp
- **Rodent Metabolism Phenotyping Core**: Amy Paller, Christian Stehlik

Full details can be found at: [http://www.feinbergnorthwestern.edu/research/cores/about/pilotfunding](http://www.feinbergnorthwestern.edu/research/cores/about/pilotfunding)
Laura Rasmussen-Torvik, PhD, assistant professor of preventive medicine, grew up in Madison, Wisc. She received her undergraduate degree from Dartmouth, and then moved to Minneapolis, where she received her Master’s degree in public health and Doctorate degree at the University of Minnesota. She joined Feinberg in April 2010.

This summer, Rasmussen-Tovik spent significant time with her three-year-old daughter Ivy and new baby Julia, born in July. She and her family enjoy getting outside during the warmer months, going to the beach, parks, and the local farmers’ market.

What brought you to Feinberg?
I was excited about the many large epidemiological cohort studies affiliated with the Department of Preventive Medicine and the activities of NUgene in the Center for Genetic Medicine. These resources really dovetailed well with my research interests. I am interested in using large cohort studies and large-scale genotyping (genome-wide SNP typing and sequencing) to discover novel genetic risk factors for type 2 diabetes and related conditions. I am also interested in understanding how we can use discoveries from these genome-wide association studies (GWAS) to improve both prevention and treatment of disease. I think epidemiologists have important roles to play in both areas.

What is the ultimate goal of your research?
I want to determine what forms of genetically-tailored disease treatment and prevention are most effective. Currently, there is much skepticism that any of the discoveries from GWAS will have an impact on how we treat disease. I agree that there will likely not be clinical utility for many of the discoveries, but I think some will have important ramifications for clinical care and prevention. We need carefully designed studies to find these important variants and to learn how best to communicate information about these variants to individuals.

How did you become interested in this area of research?
I was a genetics major as an undergraduate and worked in a wet lab after graduation. I loved the science in that lab, but felt my work was pretty distant from translation into human health on a population scale. This frustration led me to public health school and the field of genetic epidemiology. As a bonus, my epidemiology training rekindled my love of math and logic.

What types of collaborations are you engaged in across campus (and beyond)?
One study I work with is the eMERGE study, which includes a number of institutions from across the United States, as well as many diverse types of researchers (at Northwestern and elsewhere), including doctors, genetic counselors, geneticists, epidemiologists, statisticians, bioinformaticians, and ethicists. I am continually amazed by the diverse kinds of research coming out of that single study.

What papers have you recently published and where?
In the past year, I published a paper in Diabetes using Mendelian randomization to look at the association of fasting glucose and atherosclerosis. I also published a paper in Genetic Epidemiology on the impact of repeated measures and sample selection on GWAS. I was proud to publish in these two journals, as I like to consider myself a genetic epidemiologist with a focus on diabetes.

Who inspires you?
I was lucky enough to know three of my grandparents. My grandfather is 95 and a professor emeritus. He still goes to the office every day, reviews for journals, and sends me commentary on my articles. Both of my grandmothers were amazing women who were role models to me as smart, independent, hardworking women, and compassionate caretakers.
Student Q&A: Oneil Bhalala
Medical Scientist Training Program

Where is your hometown?
Morgan Hill, Cali., about 70 miles outside of San Francisco.

What is your educational background?

What are your research interests?
Stem cell biology fascinates me. It is amazing how one cell can divide and ultimately give rise to all the cells in the body. We have recently discovered that many organs have ‘resident adult’ stem cells that can divide to repopulate the tissue and keep it functioning throughout an individual’s lifetime. I am interested in knowing what molecular pathways are critical in the process of stem cells dividing into other cells that are needed in the tissue.

In the nervous system, for instance, there are adult stem cells that can divide into neurons, a process known as neurogenesis, which is important in neurological functions such as memory formation. As we learn more about the necessary pathways in stem cells, I want to use this information to expand and manipulate stem cells within the body in order to produce more cells that are lost in disease, such as neurons in Alzheimer’s disease.

What projects are you working on?
Advances in the last few decades have revealed that our brain’s stem cells persist and continue to divide after the brain is fully formed, producing new neurons. This phenomenon is present in brains of all ages, though it decreases with age. Jack Kessler’s laboratory discovered that a particular protein called Noggin plays a crucial role in maintaining and increasing the number of these stem cells. The more Noggin you have in your brain, the more neurogenesis you have. Neurogenesis has also been found to increase with exercise. To understand how the brain stem cells are being affected by Noggin, exercise, and other processes, I am isolating them from mice brains and growing them in petri dishes. There, I manipulate various molecular pathways to elucidate what signals promote stem cell division and neurogenesis.

With this information, I can identify a pathway that we can either turn on or off with pharmaceutical drugs to increase neurogenesis. This will have a tremendous impact in treating patients with dementia.

Additionally, Kessler’s laboratory has found that a small piece of RNA, called a microRNA, may have an important role in scar formation. I am studying how this microRNA functions in spinal cord injury in two ways. I am isolating and growing astrocytes, support cells in the brain and spinal cord that are responsible for scar formation, and elucidating how the microRNA affects their ability to respond to injury. I have also created two strains of mice, one that over-expresses the microRNA and another that inhibits microRNA function in specific cell types. I am using a mouse model of spinal cord injury in these two strains of mice to see what role the microRNA has during the actual injury and response. These studies will shed tremendous light on how we can manipulate scar formation with the hopes of eventually minimizing paralysis after a spinal cord injury.

Read Oneil’s expanded Q&A online.

IGP News
• The IGP has launched a new training track in Biomedical Informatics. Justin Starren, chief of biomedical Informatics in the Department of Preventive Medicine will lead this track and coordinate the training activities. Please visit the website for more information.
• Bookmark the Northwestern University Life and Biomedical Sciences (NULaBS) calendar site to keep up to date on all biomedical PhD training activities such as seminars, journal clubs, and research in progress meetings.
New Clinical Trial

**Study Name:** Rule Out Myocardial Ischemia/Infarction Using Computer Assisted Tomography (ROMICAT): A Randomized, Controlled, Multicenter, Diagnostic Trial

**Investigator:** Issam Mikati, MD, Associate Professor in Medicine-Cardiology and Radiology, and Peter Pang, MD, Associate Professor in Emergency Medicine and Medicine-Cardiology

**Sponsor:** National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

The purpose of this study is to find out if a test called “cardiac computed tomography angiography” (CTA) can help doctors in the emergency department (ED) safely and rapidly detect whether current symptoms are related to disease in the blood vessels of the heart.

Computed tomography (CT) is a radiology test routinely used for diagnostic purposes. Cardiac CT is a diagnostic test already approved to care for patients in the ED with chest discomfort; it is a newer way of looking at arteries that supply blood and oxygen to the heart. If these coronary arteries are clogged, this may cause chest pain or even a heart attack. The images of the coronary arteries obtained by CT scanners during a five to 10 minute procedure have been shown by many studies to be accurate when compared to the gold standard conventional invasive cardiac catheterization procedure. We are looking to see if a safe, more efficient diagnosis of chest discomfort can be made which will not only ensure safe, timely care, but also decrease cost.

The results of the cardiac CT will be compared to other tests which are routinely used in the ED for chest pain diagnosis – physical exam, measurement of blood markers (chemicals whose increase can indicate a heart muscle injury), electrocardiogram (ECG – a recording of the heart’s electrical activity) and heart perfusion imaging (a procedure that can visualize the heart muscle’s blood supply).

People who agree to take part in this study will be randomly selected either to receive an initial cardiac CT scan or not, in addition to other tests in the ED. Based on prior studies, researchers believe that CT scanning of coronary arteries can provide information that is just as safe and accurate as other techniques used to assess for heart disease, and can do so more rapidly at a lower cost.

For more information, interested participants and clinicians may contact the Clinical Trials Unit at (312) 926-4000 or e-mail heartresearch@northwestern.edu.

NIH News

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently released the Final Rule on changes to conflict of interest regulations regarding research. The department says the changes provide “a framework for identifying, managing, and ultimately avoiding investigators’ financial conflicts of interest.” Major changes to the regulations include the definition of significant financial interest (SFI), the extent of investigator disclosure, the information reported to the Public Health Service (PHS) awarding component, the information made accessible to the public, and investigator training.

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) has posted a list of 24 “provocative questions” (PQ) for which it is seeking R01 or R21 grant applications. According to the NCI RFAs, the questions “are meant to challenge cancer researchers to think about and elucidate specific problems in key areas of cancer research that are deemed important but have not received sufficient attention. Some of these PQs stem from intriguing but older, neglected observations that have never been adequately explored. Other PQs are built on more recent findings that are perplexing or paradoxical, revealing important gaps in current knowledge. Finally, some PQs reflect problems that traditionally have been thought to be intractable but that now may be open to investigations using new strategies and recent technical advances.”

Visit Provocative Questions on the web.

Earlier this year, the Advisory Committee to the NIH Director (ACD) established a working group to examine the future of the biomedical research workforce in the United States. A request for information on the future of the biomedical research workforce has been published and is open for comment until October 7. The AAMC encourages you to respond to this request. and welcomes hearing your thoughts on the issues raised in the notice. Comments can be sent to cas@aamc.org.

NIH released recommendations or best practices for scientists conducting mixed methods health research. Mixed methods research combines the strengths of quantitative research and qualitative research. The NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) identified the need for this guidance and commissioned the report.
Sponsored Research

Rick McGee, PhD
Associate Dean for Faculty Recruitment & Professional Development, and Professor in Medical Education and Faculty Development

Project title: “Mentoring for Success: Developing Fundamental Skills for Biomedical Research”

Sponsor: National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS)

Much of the work of the Scientific Careers Research and Development Group is focused on studying different approaches to the development of young scientists beyond primary reliance on classical mentoring by the research advisor. This particular project is funded through the NIGMS Initiative for Maximizing Student Development (IMSD) award, which provides partial support for the Collaborative Learning and Integrated Mentoring in the Biosciences (CLIMB) Program.

The CLIMB Program provides a professional development sequence for biomedical PhD students during their first two years in graduate school. The design and components of CLIMB derive from Rick McGee’s extensive experience of leading PhD and MD/PhD training, combined with the exploration of social science theories through the research of the group. All students who join the five bioscience PhD programs at Northwestern can voluntarily join CLIMB, in addition to a small number of students who are funded by the IMSD award.

The overall premise of CLIMB is the importance of ensuring that all early PhD students acquire the essential skills that will determine how they are perceived as scientists, along with skills associated with scientific investigation. The design of CLIMB is built upon systematic coaching to offset the highly variable degree to which research mentors and their research groups teach or model the requisite skills. McGee and Steven Lee, PhD, assistant director of CLIMB, provide the coaching through weekly meetings and other group and individualized interactions with students. CLIMB works closely and collaboratively with the bioscience PhD programs to ensure synergy and avoid duplication of efforts.

Since its inception in 2007, CLIMB has grown from less than 10 participants to 25 to 35 per year. Moreover, this group of CLIMB students provide a collaborative community of peers so that they can teach, learn and support one another during their critical early stages of graduate school.

CLIMB activities focus on three areas:

1. The early transition from undergraduate to PhD training in the fall quarter the first year
2. Development of highly refined oral communication skills (initiated during the second half of the first year)
3. Development of highly refined written communication skills (initiated during the second year)

A variety of tools developed for the CLIMB program are available online for reference. They provide tips and guidance for situations graduate students and scientists may face in the academic medical setting.

Raj Kishore, PhD
Associate Professor, Medicine-Cardiology; Feinberg Cardiovascular Research Institute

Project title: “Effect of Chronic Alcohol on Ischemic Injury and Endothelial Cells”

Sponsor: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

During the last four decades, epidemiological, case-controlled, and animal studies have suggested a cardio-protective role of estrogen (E2). Previous work from our and other labs has demonstrated that E2-supplementation in ovariectomized (OVX)-mice leads to the mobilization of bone marrow (BM)-derived Endothelial Progenitor Cells (EPC) into circulation and their homing to the sites of ischemic myocardium where they orchestrate tissue repair by inducing neo-vascularization.

There is also, however, emerging evidence that functional and phenotypic characteristics of EPC is modulated by factors including sex, age, existing metabolic diseases like diabetes and host of other tissue micro-environmental factors. Interestingly, the effect of chronic alcohol consumption on ischemic tissue repair and function, especially the effect of alcohol-estrogen interactions and signaling on EPC phenotype and EPC-mediated cardiac repair has not been studied.

It is noteworthy that in contrast to low to moderate alcohol consumption, chronic alcoholism or alcohol-dependency remains an independent risk factor for coronary and ischemic heart disease of more than 25 million alcohol-dependent individuals in the United States in 2003. About one-third, or 8.6 million, were women. It is also noteworthy that heart disease kills more post-menopausal women in the U.S. than all the cancers,

Continued on pg. 8
regarding the effects of alcohol consumption on tissue/or- 
organ damage in general, and on cardiovascular diseases in 
particulár, has been gathered from studies conducted with a 
predominance of male subjects.

Sex matters. Alcohol affects men and women differently for 
a variety of reasons: Women have lower body water content, 
lower activity of alcohol dehydrogenase (a primary enzyme 
involved in the metabolism of alcohol), and higher levels of 
estrogen, which has actually been shown to enhance volun-
tary alcohol consumption.

There is, however, a discrepancy between the results of 
highly controlled animal studies showing estrogen to be 
highly cardio-protective and the results of hormone replace-
ment therapies in humans in which estrogen was not found 
to have a cardio-protective effect. Whether estrogen’s con-
tribution to the pathological drive to consume alcohol negates 
its own positive effects on EPCs during cardiovascular re-
pair after a myocardial infarction is the central focus of our 
investigations.

The premise of this research is based on our published 
and preliminary observations showing that ovariectomized 
mice receiving E2 (exogenous estrogen supplementations) 
consume significantly more ethanol than placebo and that 
this increase in alcohol consumption partly blocks E2-
induced, EPC-mediated functional and anatomical repair of 
ischemic tissues. Our preliminary data also indicate that in-
creased ethanol consumption also reduces E2-induced EPC 
mobilization from BM and their homing to ischemic tissue. 
In vitro, ethanol attenuates E2-induced proliferation, tubu-
logenesis and survival of EPCs, repressed genomic and non-
genomic functions of estrogen receptors and switched the 
E2-mediated pro-cell survival PI3K/Akt signaling towards 
pro-apoptotic JNK signaling.

At present, no information exists in the literature regarding 
the cross-action of alcohol and estrogen on either on myo-
cardial infarction recovery or on EPC function. Our studies 
are specifically designed to understand alcohol’s effects 
on estrogen receptors and signaling pathways that regu-
late EPCs’ ability to mobilize and function in repair after 
injury to the heart has occurred. They will also elucidate 
the mechanisms by which alcohol may mask the benefi-
cial effects of estrogen on EPCs. This research challenges 
the existing notion that alcohol at a similar dose and time 
is equally cardio-protective to men and women and in the 
future may help orchestrate public health policies in terms 
of alcohol consumption in post-menopausal women on 
hormone replacement therapy and women’s heart health in 
general.

Elizabeth Sweet, PhD, joins as assistant pro-
fessor in the Department of Medical Social 
Sciences.

Sweet previously completed fellowships 
at Northwestern University in the Center 
on Social Disparities and Health at the 
Institute for Policy Research, and at 
Harvard University, where she was a Robert Wood Johnson 
Foundation Health and Society Scholar in the School of 
Public Health. She received her Doctorate degree in an-
thropology and her Master's degree in public health from 
Northwestern University.

Sweet’s research interests are social disparities in health, 
stress and embodiment, qualitative and quantitative re-
search methods, and biocultural anthropology. She uses 
novel applications of mixed qualitative and quantitative 
methods in her work to operationalize the everyday so-
cial contexts of disease. She has received grants from 
the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the National 
Science Foundation, and has published six articles in peer-
reviewed journals.

Edward Thorp, PhD, joins as assistant profes-
sor in pathology.

He previously completed a postdoctoral fel-
lowship in the Department of Medicine at 
Columbia University Medical Center in New 
York. He received his Doctoral degree in 
microbiology and immunology from Loyola 
University Chicago Medical Center.

Thorp’s research interests include mechanisms of inflam-
mation resolution and tissue repair during cardiovascular 
disease. In particular, he is interested in hypoxic signaling 
in macrophages and the unfolded protein response 
in cardiac tissue. As a postdoctoral fellow, he served as 
Principal Investigator on three national grants, including 
the NIH K99 Pathway to Independence, and lead author 
on 10 peer-reviewed manuscripts.
Research in the News

Chicago Tribune August 22
Los Angeles Times August 22
Fox News (National) August 22
US News & World Report August 21
BBC World News August 21

Cause of ALS is found, Northwestern team says
Dr. Teepu Siddique’s ALS breakthrough was featured.

NPR (National) August 21
How music may help ward off hearing loss as we age
Dr. Nina Kraus was quoted.

Bloomberg News August 18
Black scientists less likely to secure U.S. grants, study finds
Dr. Clyde Yancy was quoted.

WebMD August 18
Is calcium test the best way to check heart risk?
Dr. William Catalona was quoted.

The New York Times August 9
CBS News August 9
FOX News August 9
Boy or girl? A simple ethical test raises ethical concerns.
Dr. Lee Shulman was quoted.

Associated Press August 9
NPR (Chicago) August 9
Could vitamin D pills make asthma drugs work better? Study seeking an answer recruits patients
Dr. Lewis Smith’s research was featured.

WTTW-TV Chicago August 8
Chicago doctors sound off on a key and controversial switch in patient care
Dr. Abel Kho was interviewed.

Chicago Magazine August issue
What we know, and don’t know, about concussions
Dr. Hunt Batjer was quoted.

More headlines

Call for Posters

Buehler Center on Aging, Health & Society invites investigators from Northwestern and surrounding academic research communities to submit an abstract for the John and Gwen Smart Symposium. The deadline for submissions is September 30, and abstracts should be relevant to aging, the terminally ill, and other vulnerable populations, and the improvement in quality and safety of care for all. More details are online.

Honors

Liang Zhou, MD, PhD, assistant professor in the Departments of Pathology and Microbiology-Immunology, was one of 22 researchers to be named a 2011 Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The Pew Scholars program encourages early-career scientists to advance research that leads to important medical breakthroughs and treatments. Zhou was recognized for his work in immunology and gene regulation.

Melissa A. Simon, MD, assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology, has been selected as the Institute of Medicine (IOM)’s 2011-2013 Norman F. Gant/American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology/IOM Anniversary Fellow in recognition of her work toward health equity for uninsured and publicly insured women. An obstetrician and gynecologist, Simon is director of patient navigation at the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center at Feinberg. As a fellow, Simon will work with eminent researchers, policy experts, and clinicians from across the country as they collaborate on initiatives convened by IOM to provide nonpartisan, evidence-based guidance to national, state, and local policymakers, academic leaders, health care administrators, and the public. She will also receive a research stipend of $25,000.

Lynne Wagner, PhD, associate professor of medical social sciences, was honored with the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group’s (ECOG) 2011 Young Investigator Award. ECOG is a multicenter NCI-sponsored cancer cooperative group that has been in existence for 50 years. Wagner also holds a leadership position in the group as chair of the Patient Outcomes and Survivorship Committee.

Clyde Yancy, MD, Magerstadt Professor and Chief, Division of Medicine/Cardiology, Northwestern Memorial Hospital and Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, has been appointed to the new Working Group of the NIH Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD) on the Diversity of Biomedical Research (ACD DBRWG). The committee will provide concrete recommendations to the NIH Director on ways to improve the retention of underrepresented minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons from disadvantaged backgrounds...The DBRWG is charged with producing interim recommendations by December 2011 and final recommendations by June 2012.

Reed Omary, MD, MS, professor of radiology, and Ann Ragin, PhD, research professor of radiology, were placed as permanent members of National Institutes of Health study sections at the 2011 Society of International Radiology awards.
Funding Opportunities

Specialized Alcohol Research Centers (P50)
More information

Sponsor: United States Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
Submission Deadline: November 7 (Letter of Intent); December 7 (Submission)
Upper Amount: $9 million

Synopsis: NIAAA invites applications for Specialized Alcohol Research Centers using the P50 mechanism. The overall purpose of the NIAAA Alcohol Research Center program is to provide leadership in conducting and fostering interdisciplinary, collaborative research on a wide variety of topics relevant to the Institute’s mission. These topics include, but are not limited to the nature, etiology, genetics, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of alcohol use disorders and their biomedical, psychosocial, and economic consequences across the lifespan. Centers also are regional or national resources that contribute to the development of new research methods, technologies and approaches that sustain innovative goal-directed research.

Collaborative Interdisciplinary Team Science in NIDDK Research Areas (R24)
More information

Sponsor: United States Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)
Submission Deadline: November 15
Upper Amount: $500,000

Synopsis: Collaborative Interdisciplinary Team Science Awards will foster the application of interdisciplinary, integrative and/or paradigm-shifting approaches to address complex challenges in biomedical research relevant to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. The NIDDK supported R24 grant mechanism is designed to apply the flexibility of the Research Resource Project Grant mechanism (R24) to accommodate many forms of approaches including discovery-based or resource-generating and hypothesis-driven or hypothesis-generating science.

View more funding opportunities

Featured Events

9/12 Oncofertility Consortium Conference 2011
“Priorities for Sustainable Oncofertility Research and Patient Care.”
Date: September 12–14, All day
Location: Prentice Women’s Hospital, 3rd floor 250 E. Superior St. (Chicago campus)
Contact: a-krausfeld@northwestern.edu
More information

9/15 13th Annual Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Symposium
This event provides a forum for discussing and presenting laboratory and clinical research concerning the care of patients with breast cancer.
Date: September 15–18, All day
Location: The Fairmont Chicago 200 North Columbus Drive, Chicago
Contact: megan-mitchell@northwestern.edu
More information

9/15 Department of Physiology Seminars
“Control of NMDA receptor function in basal ganglia” presented by Steve Traynelis, PhD, Emory University.
Date: Tuesday, September 15 Noon to 1 p.m.
Location: Ward Building, 5-230 303 E. Chicago Ave. (Chicago campus)
Contact: kirsten-byers@northwestern.edu
More information

9/20 Microbiology-Immunology Department Seminar Series
“Evolution and Dissemination of Vancomycin Resistance” presented by Patrice Courvalin, MD, Institut Pasteur.
Date: Tuesday, September 20 Noon to 1 p.m.
Location: Lurie Medical Research Center – Baldwin 303 E. Superior St. (Chicago campus)
Contact: k-satchell@northwestern.edu
More information

9/30 Grand Rounds: Division of Hematology and Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center
“15 Years of Reduced Intensity Conditioning (RIC) Stem Cell Transplant. What Have We Learned?” presented by Sergio Giralt, MD, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.
Date: Tuesday, September 20 Noon to 1 p.m.
Location: Lurie Medical Research Center – Gray 303 E. Superior St. (Chicago campus)
Contact: cancer@northwestern.edu
More information

More events

Event organizers are encouraged to submit calendar items on Plan-It Purple for consideration. Please contact the Research Office with further questions.