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Researchers at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Awarded \$5M in State Funding

New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research Awards Seed Grants and Research Development Funds

New Brunswick, N.J., August 20, 2009 – As part of its mission to advance cancer research, The New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research (NJCCR) recently awarded \$10 million in competitive grants to investigators throughout the state including a number of scientists at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ). CINJ is the state's only National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center and a Center of Excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

CINJ was awarded approximately \$5.1 million, of which, \$3.6 million is comprised of New Jersey Cancer Research Development Awards designed to strengthen cancer research infrastructure in the state through shared resources, multidisciplinary research networks, and state of the art equipment. CINJ scientists have forged new and innovative partnerships with other New Jersey academic centers, laying the groundwork for some very exciting “team” approaches in these grants. “‘Team science’ is the wave of the future for cancer research, and these NJCCR grants should help CINJ compete successfully for major federal dollars,” said Anna Marie Skalka, PhD, chair of the NJCCR.

The remainder of the funds are designated as Seed Grants, which support new investigators in becoming established in New Jersey, assist established scientists looking for new directions in cancer research and encourage promising and novel translational, epidemiological and clinical studies.

According to NJCCR, the awards are given through an open and competitive grant program, based on a National Institutes of Health system of scientific review that is available to all non-profit research institutions, cancer centers hospitals or scientific agencies in New Jersey that meet the minimum eligibility requirements.

“The quality of the grant applications this year was extraordinary and competition was fierce with a total of 134 proposals submitted for our programs,” said Dr. Skalka. “There were many worthy proposals but NJCCR could only fund the very top applicants,” she continued.

CINJ Director, Robert S. DiPaola, MD, professor of medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, says CINJ is grateful for the state's continued support. “As New Jersey's only NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, we have the unique ability of bringing researchers together from many institutions in a collaborative way to make discoveries and translate these discoveries into the clinic to give patients with cancer the best options,” he said. “By having these competitive grants awarded to CINJ and our collaborating partners, CINJ can better serve as a resource for the state and a leader in translational cancer research.”

New Jersey Cancer Research Development Awards

The largest of the one-year awards is for \$1 million to support the study of *Imaging and Targeting of TGFβ in Breast Cancer*. Michael Reiss, MD, associate director for translational research at CINJ and professor of medicine, molecular genetics and microbiology at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical

School is the principal investigator of the project, which will be conducted by team members at CINJ, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Princeton University.

Other grants from this award category are as follows:

\$557,000 for the study of *Multidisciplinary Research Network Targeting the Autophagy Pathway for Cancer Therapy*. CINJ Associate Director for Basic Science Eileen White, PhD, adjunct professor of surgery at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and professor of molecular biology and biochemistry at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is the principal investigator for the team project shared by CINJ, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Rutgers and Princeton University.

\$553,393 for the study of *Computational and Systems Biology-Enhanced Molecular Epidemiology Network*. CINJ member Arnold Levine, PhD, professor of pediatrics and biochemistry at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is the principal investigator of the project between CINJ, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and the Institute for Advanced Study.

\$517,100 for the study of *Glutamatergic Pathways in Melanoma*. CINJ member Suzie Chen, PhD, professor of chemical biology at the Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy at Rutgers, is the principal investigator of the project between CINJ, UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, and Rutgers.

\$505,810 for equipment pertaining to the *Next Generation High Throughput Sequencing Core for New Jersey*. CINJ member Todd Michael, PhD, assistant professor of plant biology and pathology at the Waksman Institute at Rutgers, is the principal investigator.

Seed Grants

The largest of the awards is a two-year grant of \$280,616 for *Targeting Notch Signaling in Breast Cancer Metastasis*. CINJ member Yibin Kang, PhD, assistant professor of molecular biology at Princeton University, is the principal investigator for the project to be conducted by Dr. Kang's Princeton lab.

Other grants from this award category are as follows:

\$270,189 over two years to study *The Role of Leukemia Inhibitory Factor in Breast Cancer*. CINJ member Zhaohui Feng, PhD, assistant professor of radiation oncology, is the lead investigator for the project between CINJ and UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

\$256,220 over two years to study *Allogenic Cellular Therapy for Hematologic Cancers*. Mecide Gharibo, MD, medical oncologist at CINJ and assistant professor of medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is the principal investigator for the project between CINJ and UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

\$235,074 over two years to study *Effects of Fetal Zearanol Exposure on Adult Disease*. Helmut Zarbl, PhD, ATS, associate director of public health science at CINJ, and professor of environmental and occupational medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is the principal investigator on the project for UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

\$133,680 over one year to study *BMP-6 and Neuroendocrine Differentiation in Prostate Cancer*. Isaac Kim, MD, PhD, head of CINJ's Urologic Oncology Program and associate professor of surgery at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is the principal investigator on the project for CINJ and UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

\$132,853 over one year to study *The Impact of Prostate Cancer Stem Cell Therapy*. Hatem Sabaawy, MD, PhD, medical oncologist at CINJ and assistant professor of medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is the principal investigator on the project for CINJ and UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

\$130,044 over one year to study *The Role of PDCD2 in Normal and Malignant Hematopoiesis*. Dale Schaar, MD, medical oncologist at CINJ and assistant professor of medicine at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is the principal investigator on the project for CINJ and UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

About The Cancer Institute of New Jersey

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (www.cinj.org) is the state's first and only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, and is dedicated to improving the prevention, detection, treatment and care of patients with cancer. CINJ's physician-scientists engage in translational research, transforming their laboratory discoveries into clinical practice, quite literally bringing research to life. The Cancer Institute of New Jersey is a center of excellence of UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. To support CINJ, please call the Cancer Institute of New Jersey Foundation at 1-888-333-CINJ.

The Cancer Institute of New Jersey Network is comprised of hospitals throughout the state and provides a mechanism to rapidly disseminate important discoveries into the community. Flagship Hospital: Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Major Clinical Research Affiliate Hospitals: Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Morristown Memorial Hospital, Carol G. Simon Cancer Center at Overlook Hospital, and Jersey Shore University Medical Center. Affiliate Hospitals: Bayshore Community Hospital, CentraState Healthcare System, Cooper University Hospital*, JFK Medical Center, Mountainside Hospital, Raritan Bay Medical Center, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital at Hamilton (CINJ at Hamilton), Saint Peter's University Hospital, Somerset Medical Center, Southern Ocean County Hospital, The University Hospital/UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School*, and University Medical Center at Princeton. *Academic Affiliate

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