

for TUFTS MEDICINE

\$1.5 M Keck Foundation grant funds infectious disease research

The W.M. Keck Foundation has awarded \$1.5 million to Tufts University's Study Center on the Immunogenetics of Infectious Diseases (SCIID). The grant will go toward purchasing a suite of instruments that will help SCIID researchers identify key pathogen proteins and the host molecules they target in infection—knowledge that could allow scientists to develop new strategies for combating infectious disease.

SCIID researchers will use the equipment to better understand the mechanisms of infection and resistance. Some studies focus on the pathogen. **Jennifer Coburn**, Ph.D., research associate professor of medicine, is identifying the pathogenic molecules that invade host cells in Lyme disease, while **Andrew Camilli**, Ph.D., associate professor of molecular biology and microbiology and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator, looks for the mediators of infection in *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, the second most lethal bacterium in the world. **John M. Coffin**, Ph.D., professor of microbiology, studies how viruses, including HIV, change their surface molecules to adapt to new hosts. Other projects focus on the host during infection. **Ralph Isberg**, Ph.D., professor of microbiology, is analyzing host signaling pathways in Legionnaires' disease; **Matthew K. Waldor**, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor of molecular biology and microbiology, investigates the host's role in *E. coli* infection, and pathologists **Brigitte Huber**, Ph.D., and **David Thorley-Lawson**, Ph.D., seek to understand the over-activation of the immune system in Epstein-Barr virus infection.

The new equipment will include an imaging system that can capture thousands of pictures per second, allowing a cell-by-cell analysis of intracellular events. In all, the grant will cover the purchase of five key instruments, expected to be installed and in use on the fifth floor of the Jaharis Center by the end of 2006.

New center treats memory disorders

A new center specializing in the treatment of patients in the earliest stages of Alzheimer's disease has opened in Wellesley Hills, Mass. **Richard M. Dupee**, M.D., associate clinical professor of medicine at Tufts and chief of geriatrics at Tufts–New England Medical Center, directs the MedWest Center for Memory Disorders and Conditions of Older Adults.

Physicians at the MedWest Center work with geriatric specialists at Tufts–NEMC and with patients' families to identify and treat patients in the earliest stages of Alzheimer's—when treatment can provide the most benefit.

HERE & THERE

Tufts–New England Medical Center's **Akmal A. Mikhail**, M.D., has returned from a seven-day medical mission to Pune, India. Mikhail, assistant clinical professor of anesthesia, provided care to 17 children undergoing corrective eye surgery. They were volunteers for Orbis International, a nonprofit dedicated to blindness prevention and physician training in developing nations. In addition to treating the children—most of whom suffered from cataracts or strabismus—the team also gave continuing medical education lectures to local physicians. Mikhail hopes to lend his expertise to Orbis International again in Nigeria this fall.

Alice Bendix Gottlieb, M.D., Ph.D., has been appointed chair of dermatology at Tufts School of Medicine where she will be nominated to serve as the Ansell Professor of Dermatology and dermatologist-in-chief at Tufts–New England Medical Center. She comes to Tufts from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey–Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, where she served as the W.H. Conzen Chair in clinical pharmacology, director of the Clinical Research Center and founding director of the Psoriasis Center of Excellence. Gottlieb is a graduate of Cornell Medical School and received her Ph.D. in immunology from Rockefeller University. Her current research includes the study of apoptosis and inflammation-related protein and gene expression in patients responding to novel psoriasis treatments.

GRASP AWARDS

The Center for Gastroenterology Research on Absorptive and Secretory Processes (GRASP) at Tufts has awarded a total of \$88,000 to six researchers at Tufts School of Medicine, Tufts School of Dental Medicine and Tufts–New England Medical Center. The recipients are **Rachel J. Buchsbaum**, M.D., assistant professor of medicine and principal investigator at Tufts–NEMC's Molecular Oncology Research Institute; **Jonathan Garlick**, D.D.S., Ph.D., professor of oral and maxillofacial pathology at the dental school; **Philip W. Hinds**, professor of radiation oncology at Tufts–New England Medical Center; **Mircea Ivan**, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of medicine; **Orian Shirihai**, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor of pharmacology and experimental therapeutics; and **Daniel F. Ortiz**, Ph.D., research assistant professor of physiology.

IN HONOR OF

The Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development will host a dedication ceremony to rename its library in memory of the center's founder and pioneer in clinical pharmacology, **Louis Lasagna**, M.D., Ph.D. The library, which contains more than 24,000 books, journal articles, government documents and other publications, will be renamed the Louis Lasagna Library of Drug Development Science and Policy. The dedication will be held on Wednesday, March 1, at 1:30 p.m. at the center's offices, 192 South St., Suite 500, Boston. A reception will follow. For more information, call 617-636-2170.

Gene therapy trial planned at St. E's

Researchers at Caritas St. Elizabeth's Medical Center will evaluate the safety and efficacy of the growth factor VEGF-2 for treatment of critical limb ischemia (CLI) in a 64-patient, phase I clinical trial funded by the NIH. **Douglas W. Losordo**, M.D., chief of cardiovascular research at St. E's and professor of medicine, will serve as principal investigator for the trial. The biopharmaceutical company Corautus Genetics Inc. will support the trial by supplying its proprietary growth factor to the researchers.

CLI, typically the result of decreased blood flow due to clogged arteries, causes pain and skin ulcerations and can lead to amputation of the limb. Research suggests VEGF-2 could alleviate CLI by promoting the growth of supplementary blood vessels in the affected limb. Corautus is also evaluating VEGF-2 for treatment of angina associated with coronary disease, and St. E's is one of 30 cardiac medical centers participating in that nationwide trial.

Screening for Jewish genetic diseases

The Victor Outreach and Screening Program for Ashkenazi Jewish Diseases has been established at Tufts–New England Medical Center's Floating Hospital for Children. A gift from Lois Victor, in partnership with the Albert Einstein Healthcare Network of Philadelphia, helped establish the program, which offers preconception counseling and screening to young couples of Ashkenazi Jewish (Eastern European) descent who are interested in learning crucial information regarding their reproductive risks. People of Ashkenazi Jewish descent have a one-in-five chance of being a carrier for diseases including Tay-Sachs and cystic fibrosis. The program also will promote awareness and provide testing for Jewish students through screening drives at college and graduate school campuses. The first Tufts drive is scheduled for February 28 from 2 to 7 p.m. at the Granoff Family Hillel Center on the Medford/Somerville campus.

Jodi Hoffman, M.D., assistant professor of pediatrics, is director of the program. Other staff members include **Laurie Demmer**, M.D., associate professor of pediatrics and chief of Tufts–NEMC's Division of Genetics, and **Jessica Jonas**, a genetic counselor.

FEEDBACK

The *Dean's Letter for Tufts Medicine* is published eight times a year by the Office of the Dean of Tufts University School of Medicine. We welcome comments and story ideas. Contact Editor Jacqueline Mitchell at jacqueline.mitchell@tufts.edu or 617.636.3602.