



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Christina Relacion, Communications Manager
(800) 722-4673, Ext. 243
CRelacion@scleroderma.org

Scleroderma Foundation Increases Research Awards in 2012 *Eight Researchers Receive Grant Funding*

DANVERS, MASS. (Feb. 1, 2012) – The Scleroderma Foundation’s commitment to fund research remains strong despite the continued difficult economic climate. At a time when many organizations and government agencies are cutting back on vital research funding, the Board of Directors unanimously voted to increase the Foundation’s research funding from the budgeted \$1 million to \$1.2 million for 2012. The Foundation continues to fortify its role as the leading private funder of scleroderma research.

“Our understanding of scleroderma has increased dramatically over the past decade, thanks to the continued support of the Scleroderma Foundation’s Research Grant Funding Program,” said Carol Feghali-Bostwick, Ph.D., researcher and Vice Chair of the Foundation’s Board of Directors. “The program is vital not only to advancing the state of research on scleroderma, but also motivating new researchers to take an interest in the disease, she continued.

The Peer Review Committee received and reviewed 36 grant applications this year, and has awarded research grants to eight investigators for 2012. The award winners are:

- **Flavia V. Castelino, M.D.**, Massachusetts General Hospital. “Role of Lysophosphatidic Acid and its Receptor LPA1 in Scleroderma Dermal Fibrosis.”
- **Eric Lorne Greidinger, M.D.**, Miller School of Medicine University of Miami. “Antigenic Targets of Autoimmunity-associated Raynaud Phenomenon.”
- **Heidi Jacobs, M.D.**, University of Texas at Dallas. “Something New Under the Sun: A Randomized, Double Blinded, Controlled Trial of UVA1 Phototherapy in Localized Scleroderma.”
- **Ai (Anna) P. Lam, M.D.**, Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine. “Selective Inhibition of Wnt/beta-catenin Signaling as Novel Therapeutic Target for Systemic Sclerosis-related Pulmonary Fibrosis.”
- **Thomas M. Ruenger, M.D., Ph.D.**, Boston University. “Intracellular Degradation of Collagen in Scleroderma.”
- **Richard M. Silver, M.D.**, Medical University of South Carolina. “Molecular Basis for Therapeutic Interventions in SSc-ILD by Inhibition of Thrombin.”
- **Barbara D. Smith, B.S., M.A., Ph.D.**, Boston University School of Medicine. “Collagen Regulation in Systemic Sclerosis.”
- **Elena Tourkina, Ph.D.**, Medical University of South Carolina. “Caveolin-1 Deficiency Predisposes African Americans in SSc-ILD.”

The two highest scoring research proposals received the Foundation’s Marta Marx and Mark Flapan awards. The Marta Marx Fund Eradication of Scleroderma Award went to Dr. Tourkina from the Medical University of South Carolina. The award is funded by bequests from Marta Marx, who had scleroderma, and her brother Rudolph Juhl. The Mark Flapan Award was awarded to Dr. Lam from Northwestern’s Feinberg School of Medicine. It is named in honor of the late psychologist and scleroderma patient.

-MORE-

2012 Research Grants

-Add One-

The Walter A. Coyle Memorial Grant, made possible by the New England Scleroderma Foundation Chapter, was presented to Dr. Castelino of Massachusetts General Hospital. This is the fourth research grant that the New England Chapter has sponsored since the debut of the Chapter Grant Funding program in 2009.

The Research Grant Funding Program was established in 1989. Since then, the Scleroderma Foundation and its predecessor organization have funded more than \$18 million in research grants. Applications are judged by a group of their peers, guided by National Institutes of Health (NIH) protocol and criteria, to ensure that the strongest research proposals receive funding.

“The Foundation is proud and honored to continue to fund stellar researchers who have both scientific and clinical expertise needed to conduct groundbreaking studies – for it is our hope that our funds will make a significant difference to researchers whose investigations may lead to a cure,” said Tracey O’Connell Sperry, Director of Development and Research.

About Scleroderma

Scleroderma is a chronic, often progressive, autoimmune disease in which the immune system attacks its own body.

Scleroderma means “hard skin.” It can cause a thickening and tightening of the skin. In some cases, it causes serious damage to internal organs including the lungs, heart, kidneys, esophagus and gastrointestinal tract. As scarring, or sclerosis, of these organs and organ systems progress, they work less effectively, and can lead to organ failure and death.

Some medications and treatments can help with certain symptoms, but there is no cure for scleroderma. The disease affects about 300,000 people across the U.S. In comparison, approximately the same number of people are affected by multiple sclerosis.

About the Scleroderma Foundation

The Scleroderma Foundation is the national organization for people with scleroderma, their families and friends. It was formed Jan. 1, 1998, by a merger between the United Scleroderma Foundation and the Scleroderma Federation.

The Scleroderma Foundation is headquartered in the metro Boston area in Danvers, Mass. It is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to serving the interests of people living with scleroderma. The Foundation has a network of 23 chapters and 168 support groups committed to carrying out the three-fold mission of support, education and research. The Scleroderma Foundation funds an average of \$1 million in new grants each year to find the cause and cure for scleroderma.

For more information about the Scleroderma Foundation, visit www.scleroderma.org or call (800) 722-HOPE (4673).

Note: Photographs of the grant recipients are available.

For more information, contact:

Christina Relacion, Communications Manager
(800) 722-4673, Ext. 243
CRelacion@scleroderma.org

###