

HoG Funds Two New Bleeding Disorder Researchers

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Hemophilia of Georgia has named two new recipients of Hemophilia Clinical Scientist Development Grants for 2008-2009. Dr. Shannon Meeks of Emory University in Atlanta and Dr. Michael Callaghan of Wayne State University in Detroit are the seventh and eighth physician researchers to receive funding under the program, which began in 2003. Dr. Meeks is an Instructor of Pediatrics at Emory University/Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. She regularly sees children with bleeding disorders at Emory's pediatric Hemophilia Treatment Center (HTC). The title of her research is "Mechanisms of Immunogenicity of Factor VIII in a Model Antigen System." She is seeking to understand why 30% of people with severe hemophilia A develop inhibitors (antibodies against) factor VIII when they take factor concentrate. Inhibitors destroy factor VIII before it can stop a bleeding episode.

Dr. Callaghan is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Wayne State University and treats children with bleeding disorders in the HTC at Children's Hospital of Michigan. His research proposal also deals with inhibitors and is entitled, "Exploiting the Unfolded Protein Response to Eliminate Inhibitor Antibodies in Hemophilia A." When a person with hemophilia takes factor, cells that are part of his immune system can produce antibodies (inhibitors) against the factor protein. Dr. Callaghan is seeking to find drugs that will destroy only those immune system cells that make antibodies against factor VIII.

Under HoG's Hemophilia Clinical Scientist Development Grant program, physician researchers receive \$82,500 over twelve months to conduct research on hemophilia and its complications. The physicians must devote at least 80% of their work time to hemophilia-related research. At the end of twelve months the researchers are eligible to renew the grants. The maximum funding is for five years.

Through this program, Hemophilia of Georgia hopes to help create the next generation of hemophilia researchers. This funding allows a physician who has completed research training to advance to the status of an independent investigator. The ultimate goal is for the achievements of these scientists to improve the lives of people with bleeding disorders.

In addition to Drs. Meeks and Callaghan, three other researchers are currently being funded: Dr. Amy Dunn of Emory University (Atlanta); Dr. Miguel Escobar of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston; and Dr. Yanping Yang of Mount Sinai School of Medicine (New York City). The first three recipients of grants from HoG completed their five year funding cycle in June 2008. They are Dr. Suchitra Acharya of the Weill Medical College of Cornell University (New York); Dr. Paul Monahan of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and Dr. Mark Reding of the University of Minnesota.